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Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[B]E) in Malawi

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University of Sussex

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
May 2020
This thesis explores how the Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[B]E) in Malawi is developed and enacted in the Malawian education syllabus to address Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection in youth. Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education are mainly guided by the Malawi Education Act and the Malawi Education Policy alongside other specific policies which then help guide what HIV and AIDS prevention interventions are to be developed and followed. The primary aim of the study is to understand how LS[B]E is developed, and implemented, through the understanding of the main actors involved in the formulation of the curriculum and the teacher and student experiences of its enactment in the classroom.

This study is an interpretive qualitative study conducted in Malawi with semi-structured individual interviews with policymakers in government, representatives of international agencies and civil society organizations. In order to capture classroom practice, data was collected at local secondary school level, using semi-structured interviews for LS[B]E and welfare teachers, teacher classroom observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with selected students.

The study is guided by two key research questions, namely: what are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum in Malawi and how is it organized for teaching, learning and assessment?; and how do teachers implement, and students experience the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?. The findings of the first research question reveal the complexities of the LS[B]E curriculum development process. Specifically, it shows the interplay and contestations between national and international actors in its development and the lack of meaningful participation by parents and students for whom the curriculum is intended. Further, the study findings show how strong conservative moralist views shape the final LS[B]E curriculum that is eventually developed.

The findings of the second research question reveal the complex world in which teachers operate and how this impacts their pedagogic enactment of the LS[B]E curriculum. The finding draw attention to how teacher actions are shaped by the incentives made available to them, the training they receive and the expectation from the local community. Specifically, the research reveals how teachers navigate the conflicting demands on their work whilst ensuring student learning about HIV and AIDS in their lessons. In addition, the classroom practices reveal how teachers’ own personal beliefs and understandings of their vocation influence which areas of LS[B]E curriculum they emphasize on certain areas more than others. Data from the student reveal how their engagement with the teacher and participation in LS[B]E learning is shaped by teacher actions and pedagogy. Further, students reveal the disjuncture between what they learn about HIV and AIDS at school and their understanding and knowledge from home and community.

The study adds knowledge about the development and implementation of LS[B]E curricula and how sensitive and controversial topics are enacted in Malawian schools, addressing a key knowledge gap in the context.

The study recommends that policymakers and practitioners pay attention to the views of teachers and students in developing LSBE curricula as their experiences and practice mediate how it is realized. Further the study recommends that education researchers undertake a larger study in an urban conventional secondary school to explore whether there are any similarities in how the LS[B]E curriculum is enacted in such settings.
To my children, Bupi and Khwezi
whose unconditional love, patience, support and perseverance with my
motherly absence have inspired everything I have put my heart into.

The most important thing about research is to know when to stop. How does
one recognise that moment? When I was eighteen, my mother told me that
when out with a young man I should always leave a half-hour before I wanted
to. Although I was not sure how this might be accomplished, I recognised the
advice as sound, and exactly the same rule applies to research.
One must stop before one has finished; otherwise one will never stop and never
finish.

Barbara Tuchman, 1981, p. 20
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A very special thanks to my family: Bill, Alice, Frank, late Bong’ani, Kondwani, Erique, Tinks, Bupi and Khwezi. You cheered me along the way no matter how lacking in motivation I felt. Thank you for believing in me. The past ‘few’ years would not have been possible without your relentless support and love and affection. And to my special sister-friends (and their families), both near and far, who made me smile when the going got tough and I was about to give up, you kept cheering me as I went through my doubts, fears, and worries as well as excitement. You all marched with me and deserve a special mention each: Kathryn, Sibongile, Tingo, Tabeni, Bids, Deepta, Hannah, and Beatrice – you have each made my journey meaningful and worth taking. Heartfelt appreciation also goes to my ‘IDSers’ whom I nagged every so often to challenge my thinking and direction: John G, Peter T, Shandana, Miguel, Sohela, Nick, Melissa, Linda – you all deserve massive appreciation. You have all inspired me in one way or another and what better place to work at while studying than IDS. The environment itself allowed me to push myself and learn new things in the process.

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### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Abstinence, Be Faithful, use Condom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGYW</td>
<td>Adolescent Girls and Young Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Antiretroviral Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-Based Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDSS</td>
<td>Community Day Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continued Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>Comprehensive Sexuality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>Conventional Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish International Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>Distance Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAS</td>
<td>Department of Inspection and Advisory Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Development Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoM</td>
<td>Government of Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTC</td>
<td>HIV Testing and Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICPD</td>
<td>International Conference on Population and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPPF</td>
<td>International Planned Parenthood Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO</td>
<td>Life Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS[B]E</td>
<td>Life Skills HIV-Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSE</td>
<td>Life Skills Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANASO</td>
<td>Malawi Network of AIDS Service Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANEB</td>
<td>Malawi National Examinations Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANET+</td>
<td>Malawi Network of People Living with HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGFCC</td>
<td>Malawi Global Fund Coordinating Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>MIAA</td>
<td>Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIE</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIITEP</td>
<td>Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoEST</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoGCDSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSCE</td>
<td>Malawi School Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>Men having Sex with Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>National AIDS Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESP</td>
<td>National Education Sector Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSP</td>
<td>National HIV and AIDS Sector/ Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCOM</td>
<td>National Youth Council of Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCAR</td>
<td>Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIF</td>
<td>Education Policy and Investment Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLHIV</td>
<td>People Living with HIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMTCT</td>
<td>Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSLCE</td>
<td>Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa Family Enrichment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Sex Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRE</td>
<td>Sex and Relationships Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRH</td>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSCAR</td>
<td>Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector Wide Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TaSP</td>
<td>Treatment as Prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TfaC</td>
<td>Theatre for a Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUM</td>
<td>Teachers Union of Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWG</td>
<td>Technical Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN DESA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
WHO  World Health Organisation
YONECO  Youth Net and Counselling

Notes:
1. Translated data: some of the data has used Chichewa names which are presented in italics with significant Chichewa words included in brackets. As I am a fluent Chewa speaker, these were translated subsequently into English during the data analysis.
2. Anonymity and confidentiality: the names of the state and non-state respondents, including those of students and the name of the school, have all been changed. The teacher names use are pseudonyms chosen by themselves.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There has been a noticeable shift in educational learning goals and outcomes towards equipping students with a broad range of skills which is now being recognised through curricular reform (Care et al., 2018). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 particularly focuses on global citizenship education and education for sustainable development with the recognition that educational systems need to equip learners with competencies such as problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication (also known as 21st Century Skills (21CS)) (ibid; OECD, 2018a; 2018b). The youth of today face a lot of challenges from unemployment, substance misuse, unemployment, poverty and health including HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), among others. HIV and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) remain significant world public health challenges, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It was estimated at the end of 2017 that of the 36.9 million people living with HIV globally, 66% were in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with a 6.8% adult (15-49 years) HIV prevalence (UNAIDS, 2018a) in the region. HIV disproportionately affects women and adolescent girls because of vulnerabilities created by, among other things, unequal cultural, social and economic status. UNAIDS (2019) state that 70% of new HIV infections among 10-19 year olds in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), were among females. Globally, about 7 in 10 adolescent girls and women 15-24 years old do not have HIV knowledge (UNAIDS, 2018a). Despite remarkable decreases in new HIV infections due to access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and other interventions, ten countries, mostly in ESA, were reported in 2015 to account for almost 80% of all people living with HIV (PLHIV), i.e. South Africa (25%), Nigeria (13%), Mozambique (6%), Uganda (6%), Tanzania (6%), Zambia (4%), Zimbabwe (6%), Kenya (6%), Malawi (4%) and Ethiopia (3%) (Kharsany and Karim, 2016). Hence the global community committing to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Several SDGs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16 and 17) are linked to the HIV epidemic and therefore call for joint HIV transnational multi-stakeholder collaboration, action and an integration of responses and efforts towards achieving the shared goals for 2030. SDG4 seeks to ensure “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all”. As such SDG4 focuses on the improvement of learning outcomes, skills development and ensuring equal access across sexes and vulnerable populations. Education is a
fundamental human right that is very critical to people’s wellbeing. It is believed that high-quality education, including on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), empowers young people and provides life skills for responsible and informed SRH decisions (UNAIDS, 2018a; 1997a; 1997b, WHO, 2020).

In addition, according to the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, countries (including Malawi) made commitments specifically for adolescent girls and young women to ensure that 90% of young people have the skills, knowledge and capacity to protect themselves against HIV (UNAIDS, 2019). The commitments serve as a guide for conceptualising, reviewing or further developing member countries’ national curricula in a holistic and integrated manner. School-based HIV education is a well-proven intervention strategy for providing HIV and AIDS information to young people (Sarma et al., 2017; Sarma and Oliveras, 2013). Whilst significant progress has been made in providing access to education in LMICs like Malawi, challenges still remain around the quality of the education students get and the skills they acquire in order to deal with everyday challenges like HIV and AIDS.

HIV and AIDS education “transcends subject boundaries” (Brady and Kennedy, 2003, p. 78) as its topics are interlinked with other subjects and topics; and it has been argued that where such integration takes place, there is “less emphasis on the discrete boundaries and more emphasis on integrated forms of knowledge … making the curriculum more relevant, less abstract and more meaningful” (ibid, p. 78). This study looks at the transfer of education policy in line with Steiner-Khamsi’s (2012) view of education policy as a discursive practice that links transnational policy movements to national education reforms, where tangible imprints from discourses in practice cannot be taken for granted.

1.2 Contextualising Malawi’s HIV and AIDS prevalence

According to UNAIDS (2019) Malawi, despite being on track to achieving UNAIDS’s 90-90-90 target with its current performance projected at 91-83-90 against the set targets (Ng’ambi et al., 2020), has one of the highest HIV prevalence in the world. As of 2019, 1.1 million of Malawi’s total 18 million population were living with HIV (GoM, 2019). Since Malawi first reported its AIDS case in 1985, there have been increased HIV prevalence rate amongst 15-49 year olds, despite infection rates decreasing between 2010 and 2015/16 from 10.6% to 8.8% among 15-49-year olds (NSO, 2017). Additionally, while the positive
uptake of HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) in Malawi has shown an increase in spatial and temporal trends, inequalities in HIV Testing and Counselling Services (HTS), especially for those in informal employment and those that come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds still exist (Ng’ambi et al., 2020).

As asserted by UNAIDS (2018b) and OECD (2018b), the youth bulge has highlighted gaps in initial education and skills, forcing young people to leave education unprepared for work and life. The youth bulge in many SSAn countries has brought some challenges on the coverage of HIV prevention services as they remain the same thereby putting more young people at risk. Over 46% of Malawi’s population are below 15, whereas youth (aged 15-29) account for more than one-quarter of the population (OECD, 2018a). In their study on HIV epidemic projections for adolescents and young people, Khalifa et al. (2019, p. 1) report globally that “in 2017, an estimated 3.9 million [2.1–5.7 million] adolescents and young people aged 15–24 were living with HIV. About 61 per cent of adolescents and young people living with HIV are adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), and about 78 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa”. According to Malawi’s 2018 Population and Housing Census data, there were 2.6 million children under the age of five, and 6.3 million people aged between 5 and 17 years old (GoM, 2019) revealing a youthful transitioning. According to UNAIDS (2019), of the 14,000 new HIV infections, a third of these occurred amongst young people with the larger population infected being young women (at 9,900 in comparison to young men’s 4,200), with early sexual debut (PEPFAR, 2018) (Stevenson, Simon and Finneran, 2014) and child marriages (UNICEF, 2018) as the main drivers of these infections.

Malawi is divided into four administrative regions: North, Centre, South, and Southeastern, each of which are divided into districts. Geographically, HIV prevalence in Malawi varies substantially by sex, age, urban-rural, geographic and socio-economic characteristics with prevalence being higher in urban areas, where 14% of women and men are affected, compared to 7% in rural areas (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Malawi’s geographic distribution of HIV based on geospatial modelling of 2015 DHS data

---

1 The youth bulge signifies a high proportion of youth (young people aged 14-25) due to declines in child mortality combined with slow decline in fertility.
Malawi’s southern region is affected with HIV twice as much as the central region, with much lower rates in the northern region, i.e., 12.8% HIV prevalence for the southern region; 5.6% in the central region; and 5.1% in the northern region in 2015 (PEPFAR, 2018). The same report (ibid) further states that 3% of young women and men aged 15-24 years are infected with HIV, showing a higher prevalence among young women in comparison to young men at 4.9% versus 1%.

According to the last DHS conducted in Malawi in 2015-2016, 41% of young women and 44% of young men have comprehensive HIV knowledge, including consistent condom use. However, this shows no change since 2010 when the percentages were 42% and 45% for young women and men respectively. This assertion resonates with claims made by UNAIDS’s (2018a) and Napierala Mavedzenge, Doyle and Ross (2011) that knowledge about HIV prevention for young people has remained stagnant over the past 20 years with national surveys between 2012 and 2017 revealing that only 34% of young men and 28% of young women in SSA had a basic knowledge of how to protect themselves from HIV. In addition, the young people living in urban areas have more comprehensive HIV knowledge than their rural urban peers, i.e., 47% of young women and 54% of young women in urban areas had more comprehensive knowledge than their peers in rural areas who had a 40% and 42% young men and women respectively (PEPFAR, 2018). Malawi’s HIV prevalence amongst young women and men (15-19-year olds) was 1.3% and 4.2% for young men and
women respectively. As can be seen in data presented in Figure 2 below, HIV prevalence increases with age and more so for women in comparison to men (UNAIDS, 2015).

*Figure 2: Distribution of HIV Prevalence among 15–49-year-old adults DHS 2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UNAIDS, 2015*

1.2.1 *Structural Drivers of STIs including HIV and AIDS in Malawi*

According to Seeley et al. (2012) there has been some growing recognition of the importance of HIV interventions that seek to address the structural drivers that underpin HIV vulnerability. Further, it is believed that the social, economic, political and environmental structural factors continue to increase the susceptibility to HIV infections thereby undermining prevention and treatment efforts. Malawi developed its 2015-2020 HIV Prevention Strategy, which focused on delivering behaviour change interventions such as Life Skills Education (LSE), promotion of faithfulness, use of male and female condoms, and activities that addressed gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, and harmful cultural practices (NAC, 2015). In addition, a further framework, Malawi’s National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (NSP), was also implemented to align HIV prevention programmes with the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets (more of this in Chapter 2) (GoM, 2012).

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2 The emergence of harmful cultural practices in global development emerged at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, where the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence (CEDAW, 2015) made links between gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices where violence against women was defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in or likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women” (UN, 1993, p. 1). It is believed that some of the harmful cultural practices are deemed harmful with the suggestion that they increase vulnerability to HIV and AIDS (ibid).
The NSP focuses on case identification, and the promotion of access to ART, adherence and retention.

As can be observed above, HIV in Malawi is generalised with a lack of health care, structural inequalities, and poverty as the main issues; with socio-cultural, gender, and community norms contributing more broadly to power dynamics that affect relationships, thereby playing a clear role in perpetuating HIV transmission. According to the NSP, the main drivers include: multiple and concurrent partners; unprotected heterosexual sex; lack of and inconsistent condom use (resulting from poor supply chain systems and stock-outs, lack of demand, and inadequate behaviour change communication (BCC) programmes); promotion of harmful cultural practices; stigma; discordancy in long-term couples, i.e. 80% of new infections occur among partners in stable relationships, which were, for a long time, considered as low risk (Emina et. al. (2013), despite the risks from extramarital affairs and a lack of condom use (Conroy, 2015); and insufficient numbers of people accessing ART.

Furthermore, marked male and female differences in sexual debut, age disparate sex, transactional sex, multiple partners and partner concurrency continue to contribute to adolescent girls and young women’s vulnerability (Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; Pettifor et al., 2008). 53% of adolescent girls (in comparison to 47% for adolescent boys) are also reported as being slightly more likely to be vulnerable with vulnerability conceptualized as not living with both parents, living in households where no adult has had at least primary school education, or being an orphan of one or both parents (Nkhoma and Charnley, 2018). The Malawi National Plan of Action for Vulnerable Children (2015-2019) does not make any reference to child prostitution and instead mentions other terms referring directly or indirectly to children’s engagement in sexual activity like early marriage, early sexual debut and teenage pregnancy, early sexual intercourse, sexual violence, and sexual abuse. However, Nkhoma and Charnley (ibid) do report that child prostitution does happen in Malawi.

While Beauclair, Dushoff and Delva (2018) indicate that evidence is inconclusive on the effects of age-disparate sexual relationships as a risk factor in HIV transmission, Swidler and Watkins (2007) indicate that poverty among young women and girls in Malawi makes it more likely that they will engage in such relationships even though it may not necessarily
be connected to economic gains. Hope (2007) and Abramsky et al. (2011) agree that such relationships are often characterized by socio-economic asymmetries which can leave young women unable to negotiate condom use and/or vulnerable to forced sex. Schaefer et al. (2017) equally indicate the lack of evidence to confirm why age-disparate relationships happen as there could be differences in the prevalence of factors that lie in causal pathways between age-disparate relationships and HIV incidence.

A cash transfer programme to keep girls in school in Malawi was found to have significant impact on HIV prevalence amongst young girls who stayed in school, despite the fact that the programme did not specifically target sexual behaviour change (Baird et al., 2012; Pettifor, McCoy and Padian, 2012). This study resonates with another by Baird and Özler (2016) on transactional sex among 13- to 22-year-old females in southern Malawi, which also showed high levels of risky behaviour among this age group due to economic statuses. All these studies raise important questions about the assumptions that information can shift the extent of agency and change behaviour.

Medical male circumcision has also been considered a possible protective factor to reducing HIV infections (UNAIDS/WHO/SACEMA, 2009). However, according to reports by UNAIDS (2007) on randomized trials conducted on effectiveness of male circumcision in SSA, the efficacy of male circumcision as a preventative measure and its long-term effectiveness still remains unknown (Gray et al., 2012). Such assertions therefore indicate that male circumcision on its own may not minimise the HIV risk altogether (Chikutsa and Maharaj, 2015).

Despite a reduction reported in STI prevalence, prevention and treatment of STIs is still a critical issue in Malawi due to the healthcare system and access (amongst other reasons). This is socially compounded by the continuing ‘harmful’ cultural practices, such as fisi [hyena3], resulting in early initiation of sex for boys and girls. While several studies in Malawi (c.f. Banda and Kunkeyani, 2015; Skinner et al., 2013; Munthali and Zulu, 2007; Kamlongera, 2007; Munthali et al., 2006; Malawi Human Rights Commission, 2014) have tried to explain how such practices spread HIV, there is a lack of strong evidence to suggest any causal links due to complexities around narratives (Page, 2019). On the other hand, while Malawi continues to

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3 A ‘hyena’ is a man who is hired to have sex with young women who participate in initiation ceremonies when they start menstruating.
play a very big part in the elimination of stigma and discrimination as evidenced through their collaboration with Airtel Malawi and UNAIDS’s SMS-based reporting system (UNAIDS, 2017), discrimination and stigma continue to make people vulnerable to HIV and hinder their access to prevention, treatment and care services.

A study conducted in Malawi on why people living with HIV (PLHIV) delay treatment start up and, and in some instances, dropping out of treatment, particularly men, revealed that fear around stigmatization, deterred them from accessing such services (Dovel et al., 2020). Suffice to say, stigma impedes effective HIV prevention (including education interventions like LSE), engagement with HIV care and ultimately the ability to achieving the ambitious target of zero HIV transmission by 2030. Difficulty in reaching members of vulnerable populations and most at-risk populations (MARP) and discriminatory (or lack of) legislation towards MARP hinder effective prevention and the effective implementation of treatment programmes (ibid).

While Treatment as Prevention (TasP) has emerged as a means to curb the global HIV epidemic (Montaner et al., 2006), there have been ongoing debates about evidence on when to start ART in resource-constrained settings where the ‘test and treat’ approach system does not work due to people not voluntarily coming forward to get tested. In addition, the potential burden of such strategies on weak health systems and a presumed lack of scientific support for individual benefits for starting treatment are sparse (Shelton, 2011). Current ART programmes in many SSAn countries are challenged by poor health infrastructure, unreliable laboratory and pharmacy support, and a lack of human resources (Sigaloff, Lange and Montaner, 2014). It is for these reasons that Kelly (2000, p. 9) affirms that HIV education therefore “might be the single most powerful weapon against HIV transmission”, resonating with UNESCO et al. (2018) and UNICEF’s (2012) claim that HIV education, if implemented correctly and targeted at the right people with the right resources, has a meaningful impact on reducing infection and/or vulnerability to HIV infection.

In the mid 90’s the pattern of education and vulnerability shifted from positive to negative with those with less education becoming more vulnerable to high HIV infections (Leon et al., 2017). However, over the course of the HIV epidemic, education’s role shifted to that of protective in that it mitigated the likelihood of individuals contracting HIV through
increasing their awareness and knowledge and therefore providing individuals with a better understanding of personal relevance of information, which contributed to some behaviour change, such as having protected sex, taking up HIV testing to know one’s status, etc. (World Bank, 2002; UNFPA and UNESCO et al., 2018; WHO et al., 2012; UNDP, 2016).

A lot of African countries only identified HIV as the cause of AIDS in 1984, and as a result there was a lack of and/or under-mobilised public health response and information void in the period between 1975 and 1984 (Leon et al., 2017). For instance, in some parts of SSA the first HIV cases were only acknowledged in 1983 (for Tanzania); 1984 (for Kenya); 1985 (for Malawi); and 1986 (for Ghana). These delayed responses only meant many infected people were either undiagnosed or misdiagnosed with opportunistic infections thereby spreading further infections (Grmek, 1990). This acknowledgement period was followed by governments putting in place partial public health mobilisation and partial information, to help curb the HIV infection rates. On the other hand, the period between 1995 and 2005 saw a strong political mobilisation and a widespread of accurate information via multi-sector approaches between governments, NGOs, international organisations, and the private sector. It was during this phase, that education was then seen as a ‘social vaccine’ which to some extent, was believed to enhance individual’s cognitive skills when it comes to integrating information on risks, good decision-making, as well as problem solving (c.f. Peters et al., 2010; Leon et al., 2017).

As much as these periods signify an important shift and highlighting the role education can play in preventing further HIV transmissions, studies have also shown schools as places where school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) occurs. Leach, Dunne and Salvi (2014) report that even though children are expected to be protected and feel safe in school, sadly schools are often seen as places where SRGBV continues. UNGEI and UNESCO (2015) report that in SSA where the HIV prevalence rates are high, SRGBV is commonly manifested through student and teacher sexual assault against girls, sexual harassment and rape. UNGEI (ibid) further state that SRGBV has been shifting from authority/age hierarchy to violence by students (usually male) against teachers (usually young and female), as well as female teachers perpetuating violence against male students; and corporal punishment and bullying.
It however, continues to be believed that sexual health education (SHE) leads to improved awareness of risk and knowledge of risk reduction strategies, which help with making informed choices, decisions for responsible behaviour, increased self-effectiveness and intention to adopt safer sex behaviours that “delay, rather than hasten, the onset of sexual activity” (Wellings et al., 2006, p. 12). SDG4 on “ensuring an inclusive and quality education for all in order to promote lifelong learning” emphasizes that education therefore helps to reduce inequalities and to reach gender equality while also empowering people everywhere to live more healthy and sustainable lives (UNDP, 2016). The goal further states that by 2030, there should be a substantial increase in youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

SHE in Malawi has become synonymous with HIV prevention and is therefore the cornerstone on which most HIV and AIDS initiatives rest. As the Malawi syllabus clearly shows, sexuality and HIV and AIDS education are one of the key content areas in LSE. Similarly, in South Africa, they are a key area in Life Orientation (LO) as reported by Francis (2011) and Bhana, Crewe and Aggleton (2019). SHE, variously referred to as sex education, sexuality education or sex and relationships education (SRE), as reported by Thomas and Aggleton (2016, p. 14) “involves the acquisition of information and opportunities for young people to explore and develop their attitudes, beliefs and values as they relate to gender, sexuality, sexual and gender identity, relationships and intimacy. SHE also aims to develop young people’s knowledge and skills to make informed choices regarding their behaviour, and in so doing, limit their risk and vulnerability to sexual ill-health through factors such as unwanted pregnancy, unwanted, abusive and exploitative sexual activity, unsafe abortion and STIs, including HIV”. This study acknowledges that STIs including HIV are part of, and therefore cannot be separated from, SHE and SRE. It is therefore for this reason that throughout the thesis, SRE, SHE, SE and SRH are not distinguished, and the main chosen terms used interchangeably will be SE and SRE. However, Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[B]E) is the term used to refer to Malawi’s specific HIV and AIDS education whereas LSE is the subject through which LS[B]E is delivered. It is worth highlighting here that this study is therefore about LS[B]E.

This chapter outlines the focus of the study by providing an overview of the different transnational, national and local discourses that shape LS[B]E within the SE context to show how it gets developed and implemented (by teachers), and experienced (by students).
This study adopts WHO’s (2010, p. 3) holistic SE definition:

“Learning about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality. SE starts early in childhood and progresses through adolescence and adulthood. It aims at supporting and protecting sexual development. It gradually equips and empowers children and young people with information skills and positive values to understand and enjoy their sexuality, have safe and fulfilling relationships and take responsibility for their own and other people’s sexual health and well-being.”

While drawing from the above definition, this thesis focuses on the issue of curriculum development and enactment. Education is now increasingly influenced by transnational policies which take different forms in different countries due to distinct historical, social, and cultural traditions (Sellar and Lingard, 2013). This is even more so for HIV education which is seen as a global health issue calling for a unified response. As such, countries are now more inclined to use transnational guidelines and frameworks to develop their own specified responses in the name of universality of education. Wahlström and Sundberg (2018, p. 164) however state that “comparative education has consistently argued that transnational education policy indisputably affects, but does not determine, the framing of national policies”. Curriculum ideas and their meanings, though coordinated by education ministries in most contexts, are equally facilitated by additional institutions through their actors who then decide how best to communicate these ideational discourses to the general public.

This study aims to explore what Steiner-Khamsi and Waldow (2012) refer to as the lending and borrowing of transnational educational applications and how they are realised within the LS[B]E curriculum; it is therefore imperative to explore what ideas and discourses (at policy, curriculum and classroom levels) in which arenas influence the shape, as well as which actors get to legitimize these ideas. It will also be essential to examine whether any transnational education policy trends do impact on the outcome of the curriculum, and how they ascribe normative and cognitive meanings before they are communicated to the general public as a formalised curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment. In order to set the research context, this chapter therefore presents: the problem statement; the aims and objectives of the study; the research questions being addressed; and the methodological approach adopted for this study.

1.3 Problem statement
Many countries have been discussing, debating and problematising SE/SRE curricula with a sense of urgency to consider youth perspectives on SE/SRE and the organisation and delivery of SE/SRE (Sundaram and Sauntson, 2016; Nasheeda et al., 2019). Less has been done to explore the perspectives of teachers who are tasked to deliver such content once it has been developed, and what potential barriers they experience, as existing research suggests teachers actually lack confidence to teach about sexuality issues amidst tight school timetables (ibid). Ingham and Hirst (2010) report patchy and inconsistent teaching which places too much emphasis on biological issues at the expense of social and emotional concerns such as relationships and feelings.

WHO (1997) first promoted life skills [education] in the mid-1990s through its programme on mental health as a “means to promoting psychosocial competence” (p. 1). The area of life skills has been viewed by WHO (2012) as having a key role to play in health promotion especially in areas where health problems are specifically tied to some forms of behaviour. According to this notion of health promotion, it is not enough to have knowledge about health matters in order to adopt a healthy lifestyle; learners need to develop a positive attitude to health and use a range of personal skills to become empowered and take responsibility for themselves (WHO, ibid). However, such an approach where personal skills are used to develop agency, can only work if the structural drivers limiting individual agency are also dealt with. As time has gone by, the focus of LSE has extended beyond its original scope and has now been used to address a wider range of issues including HIV through SE/SRE, despite some concerns around its effectiveness and implementation in delivering the intended learning outcomes (Boler and Aggleton, 2005; Yankah and Aggleton, 2008; UNICEF, 2012).

LS[B]E is embedded in the LSE curriculum in most African countries (WHO, 2015; UNGASS, 2012). LSE is developed with a focus to encourage students to adopt attitudes and behaviours that will protect their health through the development of their psychosocial skills, i.e., assertive communication, self-esteem, decision making and negotiation (UNESCO and UNFPA, 2012). WHO (1997, p. 79) states that “skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings”, whereas at other times the term has been used to generally cover other types of skills like social and emotional learning; personal and interpersonal education; and character building.
It is evidently clear from WHO’s earlier definition of LSE that LSE is therefore very broad in nature, if not over-ambitious. While the 1994 United Nations agreement in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme for Action calls on governments and NGOs to provide for the wellbeing of adolescents (with SE, SRH, gender relations, gender equality, and violence against adolescents), there have been ideological battles (Ketting, Friele and Michielsen, 2016; WHO and BZgA, 2010) on the overall purpose, content and pedagogical methods, with one spectrum focusing on abstinence only models while on the other hand, comprehensive and/or holistic being increasingly demanded. The dominant discourse of HIV/AIDS prevention to some extent, has been largely influenced by dominant restrictive and oppressive discourses on sex with contributions from the medical professionals, and donor agencies (Drescher, 2010; Seidel, 1993). As confirmed by Chimbwete-Phiri (2018) the meaning of the pandemic therefore “hinges on various discourses such as medical science, morality, culture, faith, behaviour, etc., as understood by different people” (p. 34). As a result of these different framings, different ideas from different actors therefore influence what is to be considered as appropriate LS(B)E knowledge.

While most of the HIV and AIDS programmes in SSA, mainly led by the health sector, have focused on sensitization campaigns and treatment, King (2013) asserts in general that LS(B)E has mainly been based on: i) teaching factual knowledge about transmission and strategies for prevention; and ii) teaching positive attitudes and beliefs about the rights and care of infected individuals; and as such is seen to fall short of equipping adolescents with skills that would enable their agency in order for them to make informed decisions about their health. As such, these programmes in SSA have therefore been criticized for failing as education is evidently not seen to be fulfilling the mitigating role efficiently and effectively (Farah et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2012), though research in this area is scanty and most research has focused on other areas and not necessarily on the relevance of such programmes (Boler and Aggleton, 2005; UNESCO, 2011; World Bank, 2011). While most research in Malawi in this area has focused on three broad areas of projective⁴, KAP (Munthali, Mvula and Muluwa-Banda, 2013; Chimwenje, 1990) and impact, little attention has been paid to ‘what’ (knowledge) is known and perceived by various groups, and ‘how’

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⁴ Determining how the virus has been evolving and through this, determining how it will continue to evolve using that as a mitigation plan, e.g. if people are having multiple partners and not using condoms, the projective way would be to use multiple messages to help people understand the importance of having one faithful partner and using condoms consistently.
the targeted audiences come to know this information and ‘where’ (discursively) the knowledge they have is produced and reproduced.

Though knowledge of health risks and benefits is supposedly meant to enable people to change their behaviour (Bandura, 2004), it has been argued by Kelly and Barker (2016) that even though people are in possession of information, behaviour change can be difficult because knowledge and its rational assessment alone do not drive behaviour. HIV and AIDS as health problems require much broader approaches within the context in which they occur. There has been recognition by countries globally of the importance of developing and enforcing progressive HIV policies over the years. Such policies, especially those around LS[B]E, are expected to create an enabling environment, though reviewing the broader structural drivers that constrain agency is also quite key in bringing about change in people’s attitudes and behavioural practices. It is widely accepted that while policies have had a great impact on LS[B]E, policies alone will not necessarily mean a change in human behaviour or explain why certain people behave the way they do (WHO et al., 2012).

LSE was first piloted in 24 Malawian schools in 1999 (Kalanda, 2010) though LS[B]E has only been part of the curriculum since 2001. Most studies conducted on HIV knowledge in Malawi have concluded that young people generally have an awareness of the pandemic (cf. Kadzamira et al., 2001; Streuli and Moleni, 2007) and that the main LSE implementation challenges have been identified as: a lack of teaching and learning resources; inadequate teacher preparation both at pre- and post-teaching stage; and a reluctance of teachers to teach about sexuality (Boler and Aggleton, 2005; UNICEF, 2012; UNESCO et al., 2018).

In addition, several studies (Allen, 2005; Rooth, 2005; Ahmed et al., 2009; Helleve et al., 2009; Mukoma et al., 2009; Jacobs, Vakalisa and Gawe, 2011; Helleve et al., 2011; Byers et al., 2003) have been undertaken globally on the views of young people regarding school-based HIV and AIDS and SE and most outcomes have centred around the design and delivery of the said programmes, including: the relevancy and comprehensiveness of the lesson content; competence of facilitators; and discomfort around discussing sex issues, etc. Gulule (1993) on the other hand found, in his study on the impact of SRHE in Malawi, that students did not feel their teachers were the best sources of information while Chirwa and Naidoo (2014) and Reygan and Francis (2015) found similar problems of teacher
discomfort in Malawi and South Africa respectively: teachers only focusing on examinable subjects, a lack of resources, and a lack of impactful and meaningful content (among other reasons). Measor (2004) and Milton (2003) acknowledge attention has been paid in general to SE though there have been far less academic critique and analysis as to how Malawian-specific HIV and AIDS education is developed (from its policy); what its theoretical basis is; how its contents, pedagogies, assessment are selected; and how it is implemented at classroom level, in comparison to other subjects like English or Mathematics in other countries. It is for these reasons that this study explores whether, through the development, implementation and assessment of LS[B]E, gaps exist between what the policy (both at transnational and national (macro) level) intends to achieve and what actually happens (at local (micro) level), and if there are any implications of this process.

1.4 Aims and objectives of the study

The shift in learning goals and outcomes, which has called for students to be equipped with 21CS, has also meant that there is a lot of lending and borrowing of transnational educational applications in areas like HIV and AIDS which require a global response. It is for this reason that this research seeks to examine and interrogate whether such policies and global frameworks, in addition to the Malawi HIV and AIDS Education Policy, impact on the final shape of the LS[B]E curriculum through its development, its re-interpretation and the organisation of teaching and learning experiences. A lot of investment has gone into LS[B]E and yet few of these investments have involved a systematic assessment of the development, implementation and experience of LS[B]E in relation to transnational education policies (Oomman, Bernstein and Rosenzweig, 2007). Rather than being content with the prescribed LS[B]E curricula, this research will further explore the political dimension around it and will therefore question its development and implementation linking this to the overall HIV and AIDS education policy, as well as to the (international/regional/national/local) contextual factors around it. The study will help understand who says what is to be taught; how it is to be taught (pedagogy); and how it is to be evaluated (assessment, testing, reporting) (Ireson, Mortimore and Hallam, 1999). While Pinar (2007) agrees that there have been shifts in the curriculum development process (as it is an ongoing process of lived experience) and implies that the preparation

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5 Implementation here (and throughout the thesis) refers to the analysis of what is intended in the LS[B]E curriculum in relation to what is effected and relayed/enacted in practice.
and transmission of knowledge within an institution whose purpose is to educate remains uniform, this study, through examining the respective institutions involved in developing the curriculum, seeks to explore whether this remains the same.

The aim of the research therefore is to understand how transnational education policies impact on Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy in order for it to be interpreted into the LS[B]E curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment at school level. In order to meet this aim, the following specific objectives will be followed:

- to examine how Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy (amidst transnational education policies) guides the development of the HIV and AIDS curriculum;
- to understand the interactive processes and ways in which actors exchange and modify HIV and AIDS ideas during the development process;
- to examine how content, teaching and learning experiences, and assessment methods are organised; and
- to examine how the developed LS[B]E curriculum is enacted (by teachers) and experienced (by students) at classroom level.

In order to achieve the above aim and objectives, the following main overarching research question has been set: ‘What ideas and discourses inform Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy and how is the developed curriculum implemented at classroom level?’ In order to respond to the main overarching question, the following research sub-questions will be used:

RQ1: What are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning and assessment?

RQ2: How do teachers implement, and students experience, the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?

1.5 Methodological approach

Firstly, Malawi is one of the most severely HIV-affected countries in SSA, with a high population being people living with HIV (GoM, 2018), and a third of all new infections being among 15–24-year-olds, with, 70% of whom are girls and young and women (UNAIDS, 2015); having an impact on the country’s development and economy. Malawi has one of the highest
adolescent pregnancy rates worldwide at 141 births per 1000 girls, which is three-fold higher than the global average (Darroch et al., 2016). There are several factors that contribute to these high adolescent fertility rates in Malawi and similar settings, “including lack of SRH knowledge, limited access to use/use of contraceptives, condoms, and SRH services, gender inequality and cultural practices such as child marriage and initiation ceremonies” (Nash et al., 2019, p. 3). Being one of the poorest countries in the world, Malawi’s 40% of its population live in poverty, with 83% predominantly living in rural areas (UNDESA, 2019). Malawi was therefore chosen as the study site as it presented a fertile ground for investigating HIV and AIDS education policy and how it shapes the development of the LS[BE] curriculum as well as its implementation and assessment, with limited studies having been undertaken in the country before.

Furthermore, Malawi is, in relation to SRH rights, one of many SSA countries which are US development assistance recipients, that is impacted by the US ‘global gag rule’, which was first introduced by the then US President Ronald Reagan in 1984 and later reversed under the Obama administration, before being reinstated and expanded by the then President Donald Trump in 2017 through the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance Policy. The rule forces recipients to choose whether to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and education without US funding; or comply with the policy in order to continue accessing US funds (Saldinger, 2020). The rule, therefore, prohibits foreign NGOs who receive US global health assistance from providing legal abortion services or referrals, while also barring advocacy for abortion law reform. However, the transnational influences and domestic advocacy in Malawi is now converging through various reforms like the Malawi Gender Equality Act 2013 and its 2016-2020 Implementation Plan which was developed to redress gender inequalities that exist between men and women; as well as making unsafe abortion a political issue which will hopefully make abortion law reform a possibility (Roose-Snyder, Honermann and Gonese-Manjonjo (2020), Daire, Kloster and Storeng (2018)). Consequently, Malawi ranks in the bottom quintile of countries on the Gender Inequality Index (at position 143 out of 189), impacting on low decision-making among girls, including the ability to negotiate for safe sex (Nash et al., 2019).

Malawi’s commitment to UNESCO’s Ministerial Commitment for adolescents and young
people in ESA aspires for an ideal LSE that is age-appropriate and with sufficient
information that should be delivered through a multi-year, rights-based, and gender-
focused approach in order to improve SRH knowledge and life skills (NSO and UNFPA,
2018). As such, studies are necessary to generate findings that can contribute towards
informing and improving HIV and AIDS education policymaking processes which will
facilitate a more effective and appropriate LS[B]E curriculum. Finally, I have an extensive
understanding of Malawi’s political and contextual environment, being a national of, lived
and worked in, Malawi for most of my life, which I believe provided me with an advantage
for understanding the Malawian policymaking processes.

Methodologically my thesis is positioned within a qualitative interpretivist research
paradigm as I undertook a study of a specific social phenomenon within its context
(Bryman, 2012). Participants of the study were selected due to their involvement with HIV
and AIDS education policy development and implementation, as well as students at the
receiving end of this curriculum. As such, participants included policy makers (from
relevant government ministerial departments, civil society organisations/community-
based organisations (CSOs/CBOs) and independent non-governmental organisations
(NGOs); teachers from one selected secondary school (those directly involved in the LSE
teaching and those responsible for welfare); and the students in the selected classes. Data
was collected through the following methods: documentary review; individual semi-
structured interviews; classroom observations; and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

The study was undertaken in the Central region of Malawi in one district, Lilongwe (rural)
which was chosen for its uniqueness in proximity to a major road, where a lot of sex trade
takes place due to the large numbers of truck drivers (who are considered amongst HIV
vulnerable groups) frequenting the area. In addition, there was a small proportion of
students who were self-boarders (i.e., renting private accommodation around the school
with no boarding master/mistress responsible for their welfare, thereby the students
were left to regulate themselves). In addition, the schools in this area are mostly
community day secondary schools, entailing that most likely to be under-resourced with
under-trained teachers, making the quality of education offered of limited quality, unlike
the urban community day secondary schools. More detailed descriptions are provided in
Chapter Three where I present the methodology including the ethical requirements that
had to be undertaken for the study as well as the limitations of the study.
1.6 Synopsis of the thesis

The thesis is therefore presented in the following way: Chapter Two presents the study literature review and background to sexual reproductive health education (SRHE). In order to locate where LS[B]E sits globally, an international perspective on young people’s SRHE in relation to HIV and AIDS and in relation to the UN Global Goals is outlined here. This chapter also discusses the curriculum reforms that have taken place in Malawi, as well as the debates around SE, helping situate Malawi’s approach to SE. The recommended pedagogic practices of LS[B]E are equally discussed, which will help situate why specific pedagogies may have been selected for Malawi’s LS[B]E and how these are applied at classroom level. In addition, a brief summary of the main Malawian policies guiding the development and framing of HIV and AIDS education are reviewed in order to understand how these impact on the final shape of the LS[B]E curriculum. Finally, an overview of the funding of HIV and AIDS programmes is provided.

The final section of this chapter outlines the conceptual underpinning of the study through the three levels of macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and classroom enactment levels which are drawn from curriculum theory; structure and agency concepts; and Bloom’s (1956) Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. As this study explores the framing of HIV and AIDS education development and implementation, nuancing global, regional and national frameworks that guide this development, as well as how the social contexts, where the curriculum is implemented may also influence the delivery of the said curriculum, are therefore key in understanding what drives curriculum change and whether any local, national or transnational forces and actors play a role in shaping and reshaping national education systems; and what convergences and divergences exist. This section therefore presents a set of tools for analysing how policy inevitably mutates when travelling within educational systems; as well as what may change and, on a general level, what aspects will be identified as causally influential in how LS[B]E curriculum may be shaped.

Chapter Three outlines the research design and methodology that was adopted for the study including an overview of the debates in qualitative research. The research adopts an interpretive qualitative study approach with participants coming from five distinct areas.
Government ministries involved were the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE)), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW); and the National AIDS Commission (NAC). International non-governmental organisations (INGOs) were UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and GIZ. Community-based organisations (CBOs) involved were SAFE Africa Project, Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) and the Centre for Social Research. Finally, research participants were also drawn from the selected secondary school’s teachers and students. Data collection methods involved were: a documentary review of HIV and AIDS education policy documents; individual semi-structured interviews (with policy makers, curriculum developers and teacher trainers, teachers); Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students; and classroom observations. As this research involved young people and the topic of sex and sexuality, in-depth ethical considerations had to be considered. Relevant procedures that were followed and the associated ethical dilemmas; as well as data collection, storage management and analysis are also presented in this chapter as well. The limitations and my positionality as a researcher and how I also applied reflexivity during the research process are also reflected in the chapter.

Chapters Four and Five present the main findings of my study, revealing how transnational educational policies have impacted on how Malawi develops its LS[B]E curriculum at three levels: policy; curriculum; classroom. Chapter Four specifically addresses the first levels (of political and curriculum) showing how messy the policy space is through the power struggles between the various institutional actors (of whom some facilitate, and others hinder) showing whose voices, values and beliefs matter the most. The chapter presents the different ideational discourses which then are developed from the competing discourses and institutions, and also shows how they are linked to the transnational educational policy in order to create a curriculum that provides learners with 21CS. Chapter Five specifically addresses the final level to understand how the developed curriculum is enacted and realised at classroom level. It thereby explores further if a gap exists between what the main policy (both at transnational and national levels) intends to achieve and what actually happens at classroom level, bearing in mind that implementation of curriculum is affected by several factors including the teachers’ own beliefs and values, content knowledge and their pedagogy; as well as students’ own prior knowledge. This chapter further reveals how teachers engage (or not) with students and manage them in the classroom.
The concluding Chapter (Six) draws together the findings (from Chapters Four and Five) thereby bringing together multiple ideas and discourses around LS[B]E curriculum development and the complexities of operating in policy spaces amidst power struggles. Chapter Six therefore highlights the contribution to knowledge the study makes, as well as the recommendations for future LS[B]E curriculum development and implementation processes. This chapter also makes a brief reference to the implementation of a new curriculum which the MoEST rolled out from 2015 when my study was still ongoing, and its preliminary findings were being fed back to MoEST. As indicated earlier, since my study only focused on the old curriculum, the new curriculum is not referred to as it would not have been possible to conduct a study on a newly implemented curriculum only applicable to one of the year study groups. However, the new curriculum could, in practice, potentially be an area of future research to see what has changed and also to explore whether what prompted the change in the first place is actually being implemented. I discuss the methodological findings in relation to policy and practice implications for future LS[B]E curriculum development processes. In here, I also indicate my contributions as well as the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW, CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTS INFORMING STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review, and the contextual background of how SE specifically for HIV prevention has been framed both globally and locally (in Malawi). Hall et al. (2018) report that sexual activity among young people before marriage remains stigmatised and even talking about sex is seen as a taboo in conservative societies like Malawi. As the curriculum that is developed is guided by global and local policies, it is equally important to contextualise how this study sits within that context. In addition, the chapter presents the background to SRHE before presenting the different approaches that have been adopted for HIV and AIDS education. The specific approaches that have been adopted in Malawi are also presented, and the chapter concludes with the specific concepts informing the study.

2.2 Education policy research

This study seeks to understand what ideas inform Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy and how this then shapes the LS[B]E curriculum, including how it gets implemented. Haddad with Demsky (1995) suggest ways of analysing policy. They suggest that policies can either be conceived of as rational activities aimed at allocating resources and values, or they can be seen as exercises of power and control. It is worth bearing in mind that policies are developed for a reason and most importantly, reflect compromises between competing interests (Taylor et al., 1997). Torgerson (1986) agrees with the assumption that comes with understanding the policy process, i.e., of different relationships between the state authorities, bureaucrats, experts and broader civil society sector.

Policy has been defined as a public statement by a state about what it considers desirable in the realm of economics, education, health, etc. Policies, especially public ones, are developed specifically to state two functions which are: the cultural norms which the state considers desirable; and to institute a mechanism of accountability. According to Cunningham (1963, in Keelley and Scoones, 2003, p. xx), policy is seen as slippery: “policy is rather like an elephant: you know it when you see it, but you cannot easily define it”. Policy implementation is a messy and complex process often involving a multiplicity of
actors each with different interests (Ajulor, 2018). Opposition to policy implementation is based on several factors ranging from political processes, resistance stemming from social and cultural perceptions, class, educational level, professional expectations and geography (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). It has been argued that cultural values are not given enough priority as the government bodies developing the policies have different values from teachers or community members (ibid). It can be deduced from this that policy is therefore an instrument through which change is mapped onto existing policies, programmes or organisations (Taylor et al., 1997).

Policy generally refers to the grand, sweeping policy objectives of governments such as ‘universal primary education’ (Dembélé and Lefoka, 2007) that are most considered (Craig, 1990; Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Psacharopoulos, 1990; Rondinelli, 1994). Ball (1993) further defines policy research conceptually as he suggests that there are two conceptualisations of policy which are: policy as text; and policy as a discourse. The former suggests that they are representations which are encoded by the ones who write them in whatever way they wish, via struggles and compromises, and decoded in different ways by those who need to ‘implement’ them. He further argues that policies shift and change their meanings in different contexts. Secondly, he describes them as discourses which are about what can be said and thought, and who can speak, when, where and with what authority. As such, people are spoken to by policies and the positions they take are constructed by policies. He further states that policy is not one or the other, but rather that they are both implicit in the other as they are not simply ‘things’ but that they are also processes and outcomes. As policy is a discourse, it is therefore necessary that analytical attention is paid to the power webs that underlie the practices of the different actors as well as the discursive and non-discursive practices which are invested in policy negotiations and contestations.

Literature has presented the problematic nature of policymaking and implementation as these are often understood as two different processes with different assumptions: on the one hand as a "rational bureaucratic process model or state control which assumes an unproblematic translation of policy into action, and on the other hand, the conflict and bargaining model, which understands the policy process as loosely coupled and impossible to tightly control” (de Clercq, 1997 n.p.n.). The former model assumes the ability of the state to drive the reform process in a pre-specified direction. Taylor et al. (1997) state that this ‘rational’ model has understood policy as being separated into
policy development and policy implementation. As such, it assumes that whatever the policy was designed for is acceptable, and therefore its implementation is simply a matter of the ability and will of implementing bodies provided they are given the resources (Kgobe, 2001).

With the other model, based on conflict and bargaining, policy implementation is understood to be a process of mediation between competing interests despite the complexity of the process (Vulliamy et al., 1997). As such, this process entails the policy being transformed as it gets interpreted. As reported by Bertram (2008), a number of curriculum implementation change studies suggest that the state has no control over the school curriculum and that teachers interpret it in particular ways. MacDonald (2003) agrees that the struggles over the curriculum are therefore essentially a struggle between what education is for and whose knowledge is worth knowing. Such implementation challenges are not unusual as a report by Ott et al. (2011, p. 170) on SE programmes in the US states:

“While sex education curricula are developed and evaluated under ideal conditions, their implementation occurs in real-world settings in which the conditions such as location, programme exposure and student exposure, vary. Anecdotal reports suggest that many community organizations adapt curricula ... presenting a challenge, because for science-based programmes to maintain their effectiveness, adaptations need to be made without compromising the core content, pedagogy, or implementation.”

Education policymaking in LMICs has been studied by Psacharopolous (1990) who concluded that the three key reasons why reforms fail were: a lack of implementation of the policy, often due to the fact that the policy was too vague, e.g. having a broader aim like ‘to improve the quality of education’; the reform process never being completed or failing to achieve the critical mass needed to have an impact; and unintended consequences once policy was implemented. He further reported that policy outcomes fall far short of matching expectations, mainly because of insufficient, or the absence of, implantation (Psacharopolous, 1990). There have been major pedagogical shifts reported in most LMICs - in Botswana (Tabulawa, 1998); Namibia (O’Sullivan, 2004); South Africa (Reeves, 1999); and Tanzania (Barrett, 2007) - to move into learner-centred pedagogy mainly through multi-lateral agencies’ funded programmes. However, most such reforms have failed, as reported by Tabulawa (2003), due to resistance by teachers whose beliefs about teaching clash with the ideology of the curriculum and the reforms
are seen as being more pragmatic for Western countries where the class sizes are smaller and resources are available (Soloman and Tsatsaroni, 2001; Hoadley, 2005; Naidoo, 2006). In order to contextualise the study, the next section provides a background of SRHE.

2.3 Approaches to sexual reproductive health education

School-based SE/SRE has been around since the second half of the 20th century since the sexual revolution in the 1970s and the rise of the HIV epidemic in the early 1980s. Many studies have been conducted on different SRH curricula for young people (Kirby, Laris and Rolleri, 2007; WHO, 2010; and Iyer and Aggleton, 2013). Sundaram and Sauntson (2016) also indicate that research has been undertaken on youth perspectives on SE/SRE, the organisation and delivery of SRE and the shifting emphasis from sexual health to sexual rights within the SE/SRE curricula. In addition, the implementation of such programmes has now generated improved understanding and lessons-learned, while the evidence base has been consolidated and broadened with new recognition of gender perspectives and social context in health promotion, the protective role of education in reducing vulnerability to poor health outcomes, including those related to HIV and gender-based development, and the influence of and widespread access to the internet and social media (UNESCO et al., 2018).

The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasises children’s and young people’s right to education for sexual health (Thomas and Aggleton, 2016). It is believed by WHO (2010) that this is where young people have the information and opportunity to explore and develop their attitudes, beliefs and values as they understand and relate to gender and sexuality, sexual and gender identity, relationships and intimacy. This thesis will refer to SE/SRE when referencing to sex and sexuality education. SE/SRE “aims to develop and strengthen the ability of children and young people to make conscious, satisfying, healthy and respectful choices regarding relationships, sexuality and emotional and physical health. SE does not encourage children and young people to have sex” (Ketting, Friele and Michielsen, 2016, p. 427). For purposes of this thesis, I adopt WHO’s SE definition referenced to in Section 1.2.1 above.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16% of the global
population, and for 19% of the entire SSAn population (UN DESA, 2018). Young people are categorised in various ways, i.e., ‘adolescents’ which are 10 – 19 year olds; ‘youth’ which are 15 – 24 year olds; and ‘young people’ which are 10 – 24 year olds (Morris and Rushwan, 2015). This thesis uses the terms young people/adolescents interchangeably when referring to these categories. Adolescence is a time when young people have relatively sound health and when their physical sexual maturity is attained. However, this is also a period of social immaturity, risk taking and spontaneity which makes young people susceptible to reproductive and health risks including HIV (Leung et al., 2019). Far from being mere beneficiaries of the global goals, young people can also play an important part in enhancing development efforts.

SE equips young people’s knowledge and skills to make informed choices about their behaviour which helps limit their risk and vulnerability to sexual ill-health through, for instance, unwanted pregnancies, exploitative sexual activity including coercion, unsafe abortions and STIs including HIV. While progress has been made globally in increasing awareness of HIV and in the prevention of new HIV infections amongst young people, the declines have been slow. Of the 37 countries consulted in 2016, results showed that only 36% of young men and 30% of young women had comprehensive and correct knowledge of how to prevent HIV. While the rate of new infections fell among this group in every geographical region between 2010 and 2016, eastern Europe and central Asia had an increase of new infections by 12% within the same age range (UNAIDS, 2017). WHO reported that in 2017 there were over two million young people living with HIV worldwide, with a third of all new HIV infections occurring among young people as well as teen pregnancies on the rise in many countries. As at 2015, the ninth leading cause of death amongst young people was HIV and AIDS with a significant impact on SSA thereby highlighting their vulnerability (ibid). These trends suggest that young people are maturing early and therefore engaging in risky sexual activities much earlier. While governments have offered SE as part of their International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action commitment, inconsistency in such programmes persists (Leung et al., 2019) thereby suggesting that SE programmes and interventions may either be inadequate or ineffectively developed and implemented.

According to WHO (2015), globally young people are reaching puberty earlier, engaging in premarital sexual activities at a younger age, and mostly marrying much later; which
means they are becoming sexually active for longer before marriage (Blanc et al., 2009; Morris and Rushwan, 2015; Lloyd, 2005). According to Munthali, Mvula and Maluwabanda (2013) and Munthali, Chimbiri and Zulu (2004) young people in Malawi, start having sex as early as 13 years old and by the time they reach 18 years of age, close to 60% youths in SSAn countries will report to having had sex. Even though the constitutional amendment in Malawi raised the age of marriage for boys and girls to 18, child marriages continue to be a problem, i.e., in 2017 46% girls married before the age of 18 and a further 9% were married before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2018). A report on early marriage and adolescent pregnancy by Psaki (2019) indicates that the high rate of school dropout is due to a rise in early child marriages and teenage pregnancies. However, Paul (2019), Glyn et al. (2018) and Chae (2013) attest that while marriage and schooling may be mutually exclusive, the relationship between these two is endogenous in that the causation can be in either direction. Blum et al. (2019) report that the gap between school dropout and marriage is substantial, meaning that students’ not being in school makes them more prone to early marriages. While it may be possible that dropping out of school precipitates early marriage, it is also conceivable that marriage leads to adolescent [girls] being pulled from school, indicating that there they may not be any causal pathway (Psaki, 2019). Kelly et al. (2013) report that as much as one quarter of school dropout in southern Malawi may be due to pregnancy.

Young people’s SRH is strongly influenced by a range of social, cultural, political, and economic factors and inequalities (Svanemyr et al., 2014). All these factors increase young people’s vulnerability to SRH risks, for example unprotected sex, sexual coercion, and early pregnancy. But without the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes, young people would not know how to protect themselves against these challenges. While there is little causal evidence to support the claim that schools are social agencies specifically designed to prepare young people for the world, and for the life choices they must soon make as responsible and productive citizens (Goldman and Goldman, 1988; Halstead and Reiss, 2003) including protecting themselves against such STIs like HIV with, education continues to be promoted as one of the ways in which young people can be prepared to ensure there are less infections amongst the age group. Others (Leon et al., 2017) have argued that education can in fact be a risk factor as according to their study in Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, educated SSAn had a higher risk of contracting HIV than their less educated peers. The section below reviews the different routes through which
SRHE (including HIV and AIDS) is introduced.

2.3.1 Health Literacy

The link between health and education is not new (Evans et. al. 1994; World Bank, 2000) and health literacy has continued to gain importance in the health policy area since the 1970s (Leon et al., 2017). Other factors like income distribution, education and literacy are also classified as key determinants of health, hence health literacy is increasingly becoming synonymous with health promotion (Kickbusch, 2001). Understandings of health literacy have evolved from narrow functionalist views towards broader definitions, incorporating the range of personal, social and cognitive skills that are necessary to access, understand and use information to maintain one’s health within a broader social realm (Nutbeam, 2000; Nutbeam, 2008; Peerson and Saunders, 2009; Ratzan and Parker, 2000). SRHE (including HIV and AIDS) is usually classified as part of health promotion, though HIV and AIDS have brought complexity between general literacy and health literacy (ibid).

In recent decades, health literacy has been a much-debated topic in SE literature. Much of this debate has focused on its effectiveness and assumptions in achieving its goal of contributing to a healthier society (Kickbusch, 2001; Bandura, 2007 and 2010; WHO, 2015). In addition, variations remain as to what counts as health literacy, particularly between academics, practitioners and policymakers. Some of the concepts that are associated with health literacy include ‘empowerment’, and ‘social and political action’ (both at individual and collective level). Nutbeam (1996) who distinguished between basic functional health literacy\(^6\), communicative interactive health literacy\(^7\) and critical health literacy\(^8\) is often used as a basis for understanding the concept of health literacy.

This thesis focuses more on critical health literacy as it focuses on the capacity of teachers and students to critically question and analyse information, including the ability to use/reject such information to “exert greater control over life events and situations” (Nutbeam, 2000, p. 264).

\(^6\) This comprises basic reading and writing skills to use and understand health information.
\(^7\) This encompasses cognitive and literacy skills to interpret and use information in changing circumstances and to interact and communicate with others.
\(^8\) The possession of advanced cognitive skills to analyse and question information critically, and the ability to exercise more control over health decisions and behaviours.
Through my study I argue that, although health literacy has the best intentions to contribute to a healthier society which is HIV free, the tendency to contrast health literacy assumptions with alternative protective ways of avoiding HIV transmission has created a number of unhelpful dichotomies. Health literacy has become synonymous with empowerment, (Kickbusch, 2001; Bandura, 2010) and this in turn has led to presumptions about how people behave to protect themselves depending on their social circumstances. Pleasant et al. (2018) report that from a public health perspective, health literacy moves the focus beyond individual actors to consider wider structural issues (for instance, education, social norms and possibilities of ‘behaviour’ change).

It is argued by Kelly (2000, p. 32) that “high literacy levels significantly contribute to people making informed choices about their health including how to prevent HIV infections”. Despite evidence suggesting that educated people with increased economic power are also more likely to take risks that make them susceptible to HIV infection (e.g., extra-marital relationships, having pre-marital sex) due to their high economic social status (Dallabeta, Motti and Chipangwi (1993); Fylkesnes et al. (1997); Kelly (2000); Soler-Hampejsek et al. (2001); Hargreaves and Glynn (2002), there is counter-evidence on the role of education and its link to HIV prevention due to the role of education shifting from being a ‘social vaccine’ to a ‘risk factor’ (Leon et al., 2017), as well as how schools have now become grounds for SRGBV, showing that the contestation remains. Similarly, in their review of the impact of education on sexual behaviour in SSA, Zuilkowski and Jukes (2012) “revealed that education can have a differential effect on different sexual behaviours, i.e., in this case it was focusing on sexual initiation, number of sexual partners, and condom use. Contrary to belief, this study found that educated people were less likely to use condoms”. The review concludes that “taken as a whole, these studies strongly support the hypothesis that more educated individuals are more likely to use condoms than less educated individuals; the majority found a protective relationship while none found a negative relationship” (Ibid, p. 568).

As such, the generalization of the link between education and HIV prevention should therefore be carefully considered on individual separate sexual behaviours, though Gregson et al. (2001) also acknowledges that more educated people are better able to respond effectively. This suggests that education alone is not the sole factor in HIV prevention. Education interventions should therefore be understood through the context in which they are externalised, reconceptualised and internalised in order to
develop meaningful interventions for beneficiaries.

Zimmerman and Woolf (2014) highlight the importance of recognising myriad social factors, especially in areas of low health literacy, and the impact of socioeconomic disparities including any unequal access to good quality education. I address here issues associated with biology versus medical perspectives of HIV prevention methods considering socio-cultural discourses, academic versus practitioner knowledge, and cognitive versus embodied pedagogies. In addition, a closer look at the intricate processes of how teachers’ pedagogies regulate sexual identities and sexual behaviour thus becomes paramount to better understanding SE teaching. While teachers are given the responsibility to impart this crucial HIV prevention knowledge to students, they are not just raising the critical consciousness of the students, but that they are also ‘confusing, positioning and polarising them’ as Freire (1970) advocated. Students are able to distance themselves from the realities of the social equity issues. Students practice this through third person referencing through the use of cognitively-oriented pedagogies (as opposed to critical issues via contextual practice), which in turn leads to superficial engagement. As such, social equity is not embraced as a personal issue but rather as a collective problem which is located somewhere beyond the reach of their own personal actions. The importance of considering health literacy cannot be understated here as much of individual’s health literacy depends on factors beyond their control. Further, social equity is further transposed from MoEST’s context to the students’ and teachers’ own experiences. This in a way highlights the gap between the school context (i.e., students and teachers) and the ministry itself in regard to practices (i.e., between the curriculum’s intended pedagogy and what is realised in the classroom). As such, many teachers and students are influenced as much, if not more, by simple public discourses as they are by research and inquiry.

It is therefore important to approach health literacy pedagogy by adopting the underlying concepts of the complementary relationships that exist between the biomedical and the medicalised side of HIV prevention in LMICs (Lloyd, 2005). The social context which young people are experiencing has been transformed in comparison to how their parents and/or grandparents grew up amongst a myriad of challenges and advancements. There are evidently more opportunities and challenges faced by today’s adolescents, especially in LMICs where they are more likely to be more independent from parents and spend most of their daytime in school. In addition, other contexts,
particularly health information technology, are increasingly changing, since adolescents are increasingly using these media for communicating, for example about health information, thereby influencing the extent and development of literacy skills (Pleasant and Kuruvilla, 2008).

The conceptualisation of sexual literacy or sexual health literacy is still underdeveloped despite explorations through several studies (Graf and Patrick, 2015; Guzzo and Hayford, 2012; Jones and Norton, 2007; McMichael and Gifford, 2010, 2010; Reinisch and Beasley, 1990). Originally sexual literacy was first used in an American study (Reinisch and Beasley, 1990) which tested basic sexual health knowledge, and its meanings have shifted since then to examining maternal SRH around pregnancy risk, pregnancy mortality, and the side effects of contraceptives (Guzzo and Hayford, 2012). However, more recently, Graf and Patrick (2015) have added sources of sexual health information including risk knowledge and behaviours, though it has been argued by Martin (2017) in a study of young people’s sexual health literacy that measuring sexual health literacy does not give a comprehensive picture of an individual’s sexual health literacy, for instance, the context in which individual sexual decision-making takes place is subjective.

Kirby, Laris and Rolleri (2007) do acknowledge, though, that despite these limitations, there is now clear evidence that SE programmes, as part of health literacy, do help young people to delay sexual activity and also improve their understanding of contraceptive use for when they become sexually active, thereby reducing the risk of unintended pregnancies and STIs (including HIV). However, there is evidence which shows that young people do not always get the most basic SE and that the misinformation around unprotected sex and its consequences still remains largely common. As such, stronger responses in implementing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes continue to be a challenge in the SSAn region.

In societies like Malawi, elders are to some extent, expected to play a critical role in educating young people on their physical, emotional and sexual development. However, Munthali (2010) notes that as most parents are not comfortable discussing some of these issues with their young people, this home socialisation is insufficient, hence there is an increasingly growing need for CSE to be provided in a school setting. However, not all SE
that is provided is accurate. Myths and/or misconceptions persist; for instance, not falling pregnant if one had only one encounter of unprotected sex; condoms are not necessarily effective so there is no point in using them when having sexual intercourse; having sexual intercourse in water does not get women pregnant; mosquitos can transmit HIV; having unprotected sexual intercourse with a virgin can cure HIV; etc. (as reported by Fearon et al., 2015).

A lack of consensus on how SE should focus on managing the consequences of young people’s sexual activity (i.e., unwanted teenage pregnancies and STIs) arose in the early 1980s. Some advocated SE that provided contraceptive information (like Clarke, 1982) while others argued that “straightforward provision of factual information is relatively unimportant, compared to the need to improve motivation” (Reid, 1982, n.d.). As such, SE around this decade was located within personal, social and health education (PSHE), which aimed to improve decision making skills, raise self-esteem, clarify values and increase sensitivity to the needs of others (Reid, 1982; Massey, 1987). However, the HIV epidemic has changed all this: Aggleton (1989) and Massey (1987) argued for the importance of educating young people about AIDS as one of the most important means of responding to the epidemic, both in the context of primary prevention and in relation to efforts to challenge discrimination and prejudice (Aggleton, 1989).

HIV and AIDS education therefore needs to adopt a holistic approach to SE/SRE because it takes place within “discrete cultural, political, and social contexts” (Reid, 1982; Massey, 1987; Aggleton, 1989). It needs to consider the intra-curricular context (i.e., within the curriculum itself), the extra-curricular (e.g., situations in and around school, but outside the formal curriculum), and para-curricular factors (e.g., in households and communities). For most SRHE developed elsewhere, a lot of emphasis has been placed on the medical side of sex as reproduction (through pregnancy). Where disease has been concerned, there has also been a biological and medical view of sex, e.g., when you have (unprotected) sexual intercourse, you may get STIs with symptoms which have to be followed by specific treatment.

2.3.2 Abstinence-only/Morality Approaches and Healthy Approaches

The moral battles fought around SE as will be observed below, reflect the conflicting perspectives on how a society is allowed to socialise its young citizens. The main
approaches that have emerged most clearly from scholars on what is best for young people have also been around marriage and procreation. In most SSAn countries, SE has been framed within a ‘damage limitation’ perspective with most of it focusing on the ‘dangers of diseases, pregnancy, loss of reputation and moral character’ with less emphasis on ‘pleasure and empowered choice’ thereby steering it towards fear and prohibition (Hall, 2009; Aggleton et al., 2018a). Most secular initiatives tend to be paralysed in both public and private sectors, through their moral and cultural perceptions, evident through the limited information young people get. This limitation in its own way systematically shows the hierarchy between the preventative measures that are presented to young people. There are mainly two approaches to SE, i.e., realist and idealist approaches (also known as progressive) and conservative or abstinence-only respectively.

Idealist approaches are often socially conservative and associated with Christian principles and some elements of conservative political movements. They usually assume heterosexual monogamous marriage to be the norm, as such heteronormativity is assumed on both sides of sexuality education curriculum debate where for instance, gay and lesbian youth are dissuaded from speaking out hence they remain silent and hidden. In this case, sexuality is perceived as a dangerous and uncontrollable force from which adolescents must be rescued (McClelland and Fine, 2008). Similarly, Giroux (2000) agrees that sexuality is therefore perceived as immoral, corrupt and, consequently, the destruction of childhood innocence as the children as perceived as “innately pure and passive” (p. 2), and therefore in need of protection from the violence, crime, and poverty that shape adults’ experiences. As such, teachers are then forced to teach what is perceived as culturally accepted for fear of recrimination from parents, and therefore afraid to broach the issue of sexuality even when relevant for classroom discussions (Field and Tolman, 2006). Hence, the promotion of abstinence until marriage as the ideal, along with faithfulness within marriage. Obviously from this perspective, the acknowledgement of other forms of sexuality is not acceptable, as they are considered taboo.

The realist approach on the other hand has been associated with public health and progressive or liberal political movements. Such approaches tend to acknowledge and accept people’s sexuality (whether in a heterosexual or homosexual relationship, in and out of marriage). In such approaches, the main focus is on how safely sexual activity
should take place for all involved. Advocates of such approaches fight for the human rights of individuals (UNAIDS, 2004). Realist approaches promote condom use while idealist approaches ignore condom use as an option. These two approaches vary: the abstinence approach tends to meet much criticism due to its lack of frank information including availability of health supplies, be it condoms or access to SRH services; the advocates of the realist approach argue that the availability of information is highly effective when it comes to the prevention of unwanted early pregnancies and STIs (WHO et al., 2012).

The most popular approach is what is often referred to as the ‘ABC’ (Abstinence, Being faithful to one’s partner, and using a Condom) slogan, and it has become synonymous with HIV and STI prevention since the 2000s. ABC is more on the realist side: as it is usually adopted in practice in ways that segments the different approaches, with A being promoted as appropriate for adolescents and those who are not married; B being promoted to those already married; and C promoted to those that have gone through marriage but who are not married anymore.

Ewing (1944) and Bennett (1945) argued that SE should also provide (Christian) moral education, with a particular focus on the importance of family life (Iyer and Aggleton, 2015). The two dominant approaches have been on: i) abstinence-only approaches (focusing primarily, if not exclusively, on promoting abstinence outside of marriage, on moral as well as health grounds); and ii) the comprehensive approach (focusing on supporting young people’s ability to decide whether and when to have sex whilst also recognising that “sexual debut in adolescence is normative behaviour as this approach seeks to prepare youth with the appropriate knowledge and skills they need in order to have healthy sexual lives” (Boonstra, 2010, p. 18).

Abstinence-only/morality approaches emphasise cultural preservation whilst also perceiving education as a tool to convey the dominant religious and moral values and norms on sexuality (Pilcher, 2004; Reiss, 2005). Most programme planners have been trying to convince young people to delay sex initiation until marriage as it is believed that it is morally wrong for young people to have sex before marriage. The ‘abstinence-only’ programmes focus primarily or exclusively on the putative benefits of abstaining from sex. They take a normative standpoint and only consider ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ with the
expectation that young people should follow these framings on values and norms rather than be allowed to develop their own (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008).

As such, people delivering such programmes may, to some extent, distort or deliberately denigrate the effectiveness of contraceptives and safer sex behaviours. This type of education has been found to be futile when it comes to stopping young people from having premarital sex. Kirby (2007) conducted an in-depth study on such programmes, and it was concluded that they were not effective at stopping or delaying premarital sex. The promotion of abstinence is strongly advocated in resource-constrained contexts like Malawi as a way of preserving the cultural and religious status quo rather than addressing the more pressing health issues like high teenage pregnancy rates or STIs (including HIV).

In addition to these failures (Haberland and Rogow, 2015), abstinence-only approaches are also criticised for not allowing students space to voice their opinions, as they are viewed as passive and incapable of employing agency (Altinyelken and Olthoff, 2014).

Health approaches emphasise distressing concerns with regards to SRH and use education as one way of alleviating them. Examples include STIs such as HIV, unwanted pregnancies, FGM, and sexual abuse. Young people have recently been considered to be a potential ‘at risk group’ in relation to HIV and AIDS in Malawi (UNAIDS, 2015) which has put the review of LSE as a subject in the limelight. The health approach then assumes that a value-free and objective education has the potential to offer factual and technical information on sexuality in order to help young people to manage their sexual lives and the health outcomes of their sexual experiences (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008). As a result of this, it tends to neglect the social inequalities and other contextual issues which influence the behaviour choices of young people. So, it neglects aspects around desire, passion and pleasure or any other positive element of sexuality. In addition, more emphasis is placed on girls and women as they are perceived as the vulnerable ones (Altinyelken and Olthoff, 2014).

2.3.3 Comprehensive Sexuality Education Approaches

Those that do not entirely agree with abstinence-only approaches advocate for more comprehensive approaches. Parker et al. (2009) states that CSE is “one of the most important tools to ensure that young people have the information they need to make healthy and informed choices” (p. 227). UNESCO et al. (2018, p. 16) define CSE as a
“... curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.”

Though there is a lot of expectation with CSE, those that tend to support it tend to be adults, who, though they may be conservative, are pragmatic. They strongly believe that it is inevitable and unavoidable with the HIV pandemic that societies must accept the reality that young people are involved in sexual behaviour much earlier, and that they should therefore be given appropriate knowledge to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to feel comfortable and confident about their sexuality. Even though proponents of abstinence-only approaches argue that this is problematic, there is no evidence proving that providing CSE increases sexual risk-taking amongst young people (Santelli et al., 2017; Lloyd, 2005; Kirby, 2007).

It is advocated by UNESCO et al. (2018) that there should be a realistic and effective dual approach on abstinence as well as a more comprehensive approach which will provide protection for those already sexually active. Supporters of comprehensive approaches state that there are weaknesses in abstinence-only approaches as they focus more on behaviour and thereby limit the achievements towards other desired outcomes like gender equality; critical thinking skills; a sense of confidence and belief in the future; and sexual pleasure. Comprehensive approaches are rooted in the United Nations’ ICPD Programme of Action (Haberland and Rogow, 2015). Comprehensive approaches are therefore characterised by rights-based approaches (including gender and power); have a gender focus; promote participatory learning; encourage youth advocacy and civic engagement; and are culturally appropriate.

Such rights-based approaches (synonymous with the empowerment approach) advocate against the early health-focused CSE traditions that promote gender and conformity and silencing, in particular, girls’ desires (Allen, 2005; Fine and McClelland, 2006; Rogow and Haberland, 2005). Proponents of this approach observe that girls’ sexuality is often portrayed exclusively in terms of risks, danger and vulnerability, with girls portrayed as the gatekeepers of boys’ natural sexual urges, thereby offering the sexual double-
standard, and the discursive silencing of girls’ sexual desire leading to distorted understandings of (particularly) girls’ sexual agency, subjectivity, and autonomy (Vanwesenbeeck, 2020). The next section therefore reviews the debates that have informed how SRHE is framed.

2.4 Key debates in sex education

Sexuality intersects with issues of gender, class/education, ethnicity and race. ICPD+5, UNFPA (2014), Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and UNESCO et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of providing appropriate SRH education that also aims to ameliorate gender inequality, with the rise in gender inequality and violence against women and girls; and interrelatedness of sexual health problems (e.g., STIs, HIV), and human rights violations (e.g., intimate partner violence (Jewkes et al., 2010)). Further emphasis is made on gender to ensure that it is not seen as an add-on, but that the curriculum should be expected to critically examine and address gender inequalities and stereotypes, thereby empowering young people, especially girls and other marginalized young people (Haberland and Rogow, 2015).

As such, some studies have uncovered values and norms that might implicitly be communicated in SE/SRE. For instance, SE/SRE might deconstruct hegemonic gender structures (c.f. Sanjakdar et al. (2015), as well as racialized knowledges (c.f. Bredstrom, 2005; Quinlivan, 2017) which in turn shapes SE/SRE curricula and expose ‘hidden lessons’ of the curriculum (Fields, 2008), or in other cases ‘make visible’ how heterosexual structures influence classroom interaction (Ryan, 2016). The global framing of SE/SRE has shifted in the last few decades based on normative and descriptive meanings of what this type of education really entails (Iyer and Aggleton, 2015; Aggleton et al., 2018b). There are debates around what is not morally corrupting education and whether the topics are appropriate (Rose and Friedman, 2013; Turnbull et al., 2010) with arguments continuing for and against the discussion of sexual matters, specifically on what the motivations for SE/SRE are. McClelland and Fine (2017) have also highlighted how school-based SE/SRE is not neutral thereby questioning its logic while also highlighting the individualistic, neoliberal approach to sexuality that it relies on (Bay-Cheng, 2017), which according to Holland, Ramazanoglu and Sharpe (2004) comes at the cost of attention to power differences, sexual agency and sexual pleasures. The key global debates and perspectives
around SE have varied from the prevention of venereal diseases and the relaxation of morals in war-time Britain in the 1940s, to a range of responses to sexual liberation in the 1960s and 1970s.

The shift in the 1980s focused on the prevention of STIs including HIV, on teenage pregnancy and on the managing of such consequences, with contestations around providing contraceptive information (Clarke, 1982), or the straightforward provision of factual information (Reid, 1982). It was further noted by Reid (1982) and Massey (1987) that the SE that was delivered during this era was located within personal, social and health education schools which aimed to improve decision making skills, raise self-esteem, clarify values and increase sensitivity to the needs of others. It has also shifted from a focus on preventing STIs (including HIV) and teenage pregnancies to the provision of sexual reproductive health (SRH) services alongside SE in the 2000s (Iyer and Aggleton, 2015; Aggleton, Yankah and Crewe, 2011). This shift in relation to 21CS has signaled how the education has moved from the prevention of pre-marital sexual activity to how sex is then managed in terms of its outcomes. While UNDP (2016) asserts that every young person will one day have life-changing decisions to make about their SRH, research (Iyer and Aggleton, 2015) does show that the majority of adolescents still lack the knowledge required to make those decisions responsibly, leaving them vulnerable to coercion, STIs (including HIV) and unintended pregnancies.

Massey (1987) and Aggleton (1989) further argue for the importance of SE especially in an HIV era, as they state that the education is the most important means of responding to the epidemic “both in the context of primary prevention and in relation to efforts to challenge discrimination and prejudice” (ibid, 1989, n.p.n.). In addition, Massey (1987, n.p.n.) further warns that a lack of effective AIDS education could lead to a “young population dying not of ignorance, but of inability to translate knowledge into action”. SE has been conservative in some countries based on the assumption that once children are introduced to SE, they will then go and explore further thereby encouraging them to become sexually active before they are mature enough to make informed decisions. Kirby, Laris and Rolleri (2007) have however indicated, based on past empirical evidence conducted by Grunsein (1997) across a wide variety of countries, cultures and groups of youth, that educating adolescents on sexual matters does not trigger or increase their early sexual involvement. In fact, well-designed and properly planned interventions do not encourage promiscuity or heightened sexual activity:
“School-based sex education can be effective in reducing teenage pregnancy especially when linked to access to contraceptive services. The most reliable evidence shows that it does not increase sexual activity or pregnancy rates” (Grunseit, 1997, p. 1).

Early adolescence (10 to 14 years) is a specific period in which significant physical, psychological and behavioural changes take place (Melamedoff and Tellechea, 2007) and it is therefore important to ensure that students are well-equipped with what they need to cope with such changes (Kirby, Laris and Rolleri, 2007). The expectation of any HIV and AIDS education is that through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, students are expected to change behaviour (Coleman and Ball, 2009). Nevertheless, with multi-stakeholder approaches to help people to change behaviour, there is limited success reported due to the complex social-structural approaches which do not nuance the main social and structural determinants of people’s behaviour to help them to select the most appropriate levels of interventions (Kaufman et. al, 2014; Kelly and Barker, 2016). Limited attention is therefore paid to understanding the psychological and sociological conditions preceding the behaviour.

In addition to the provision of SE, it is equally important to provide appropriate training to those that will be entrusted with the teaching, i.e., teachers, as well as providing them with the appropriate resources and materials and showing them the appropriate teaching strategies (Aggleton, 1989). It is clear from this overview that the tensions between the moralistic, biomedical and more liberal framings of SE still persist up to today with the moralistic exhortations to exercise self-restraint on the one hand, and a focus on responsible sexual behaviour outside the marriage context on the other, and as well as these, the linking of SE to SRH services. This also shows a shift from preventing young people’s sexual activity to managing its outcomes (Iyer and Aggleton, 2015).

Schools are therefore seen as one of the places for targeted HIV education as they “reach a high number of children at any given time” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 11) and they provide the space for evidential, age-specific knowledge about puberty, sexuality, relationships, reproductive health, and issues of child safety and protection, based on values of respect and rights within the broader education system (Goldman, 2010). UNESCO and UNFPA (2012) and WHO (2012) have therefore emphasised that in order to slow down the spread of HIV, targeting the younger generation before they become sexually active is more
effective. However, this assumes the perceived efficacy of education programmes as it assumes that the targeted audience may not be sexually active (Kelly, 2000). Governments have taken the initiative to include HIV education in national curricula so that they can attempt to give students the ability to acquire knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that will equip them with the essential ‘psychosocial’ skills to protect themselves from HIV infection (UNICEF, 2012).

2.5 Curricula approaches to HIV and AIDS education

It is asserted (Goodson, 1989; Petrina, 1998; Pinar et al., 1996) that curriculum designs are generally selected for their powers in bolstering political causes and conferring political status. There have been several curriculum models, e.g., Taba’s, Tyler’s, etc. (Cheng-Man, 2001). The most influential of these has been Tyler’s. As argued by Tyler (1949, p. 1):

“The rationale ... developed begins with identifying four fundamental questions, which must be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instructions. These are:
- What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
- What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?
- How can we determine whether the purposes are being attained?”

Tyler’s model follows a logical sequential approach (Wraga, 2017), and it focuses on purposes, experiences, teaching and learning methods, and evaluation. Tyler (ibid) further states that in order to logically design learning experiences, objectives should be specific (though he is not specific about how these could be broken down). The Tylerian model on the other hand, has been criticised by Grundy (1987) and Cheng-Man (2001) for its linearity, and the logical and sequential model it adopts. They further argue that it relies on a rational conception of the world wherein favourable outcomes can only be reached if preceded by distinct plans and clear objectives. As a result, cognitive dissonance happens when rules are contradictory with the nature of behaviour. In addition, Tyler’s model has also been criticised for being too objective-centred as it puts a lot of focus on the curriculum design, development and evaluation and not much on the teachers and learners per se.

Keating (2006) criticises such curriculum models as he believes that the set objectives should be drawn from three important sources, i.e., the student; society; and the subject
matter. He believes that if the curriculum does not address these sources, then it is problematic and will therefore not be the best curriculum. This is in contrast to Tyler’s belief that “the important thing is for the students to discover content that is useful and meaningful to them” (Meek, 1993, p. 83). It is for these reasons that Doll (1993) suggests a curriculum matrix should focus on richness, recursion, relationships and rigour, which then gives back the power to the teachers as well as to the students through interactions, and which also promotes reflective practice.

Bernstein (2000) provides two different pedagogic approaches to curriculum, the performance model and the competence model. Competence-based curriculum is interested in the learner’s competences which are believed to be innate. Thus, knowledge is not imposed from the outside, but draws on competences that learners already have. This therefore encourages teaching that draws from a learner’s own experiences and ‘everyday knowledge’ and, in turn, assists learners in using their new learning in their lives and work. This focus on the learner and everyday experience tends to affirm learners and build their confidence, whatever their background. It also provides the teachers and learners with important ways into the formal school knowledge that is to be taught, and later with the basis for applying that formal knowledge. Because a competence curriculum blurs the line between school learning and everyday experience, very specific places for learning – for example school classrooms – are not regarded as very important. Learning, it is assumed, does and can take place anywhere, be it at home, work, or at school. Predictably, then, learning tends to be organised around themes and projects and is based on experience. Learners also have a large measure of control over what they learn (selection); when they learn it (sequence); and how quickly they progress through the learning (pacing).

In performance-based models there are visible pedagogies where the teacher explicitly spells out to the students what and how they are to learn, with a recognisable strong framing or lesson structure, collective ways of behaving and standardised outcomes. Bernstein (ibid) explains that a performance curriculum is characterised by developing high levels of understanding, often in particular subjects. Consequently, the curriculum tends to be learner-centred; learners take control of their own learning and the teacher’s role tends to be covert. Performance models also allow time to reflect on the issues being raised which then contributes to the shifting forms of how knowledge is organised. It is also specific about what the content ought to be and in what order; focuses on
depersonalised formal ‘school knowledge’ rather than on everyday knowledge and experience; and is usually vertically organised in contrast to a competence-based curriculum. In other words, it builds knowledge and understanding in a specific sequence which means each bit of knowledge becomes more complex than the previous bit of knowledge over time.

2.5.1 Characteristics of effective curriculum development, design and good practice

Curricula can be understood as important documents (Clarke and Pittaway, 2014) that guide teaching and learning processes in educational contexts (Collier-Harris and Goldman, 2017). Curricula provide opportunities for developing students’ skills and competencies as well as for monitoring and assessing learning achievement outcomes. As such, identifying goals, designing learning outcomes, planning lessons, structuring the sequencing of lessons, and supporting children’s learning are important aspects of curricula.

However, as asserted by Miedema, Maxwell and Aggleton (2011), Boler and Aggleton (2005), and Turner and Shepherd (1999), there is less agreement on the central goals of school-based HIV and AIDS education as well as what shape it needs to take. School-based HIV education is often delivered as part of a larger curriculum, and in most cases, as SE. Despite having a well-designed HIV education programme in place, other factors may affect its overall outcomes. There are often competing factors such as availability of teachers, distribution of teaching materials as well as the time that is allocated towards the new curriculum (Boscarino and DiClemente, 1996).

The curriculum is defined in various ways. Some define it as the planned subject matter content and skills to be presented to students, whereas others say that the curriculum is only that which students actually learn. Others hold the very broad definition that the curriculum is all experiences students encounter in school, learned or unlearned and out of school, taught and untaught. Apple (1995) defines the curriculum as a tool through which the values, needs, aspirations, interests and objectives of the society or the nation are articulated and addressed as learning experiences for the development of individuals through teaching and learning. As Tanner and Tanner (1995, p. 158) also state:

“it is the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes that are formulated through systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences
under the auspices of the school, for learners’ continuous and willful growth in personal social competence.”

The curriculum itself, therefore, defines what counts as valid knowledge and its development is in effect an investigation of how the individual experiences in that specific educational journey are to be organised. As Pinar (1975b, p. 400) points out, curriculum is:

“... not only an environment-producing discipline, involving the formulation of objectives, design, even criticism ... It is a knowledge-producing discipline, with its own method of inquiry and its own area of investigation. Currere, historically rooted in the field of curriculum, in existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, is the study of educational experience.”

According to UNESCO (2016) successful curriculum key indicators include the learner achievement quality; and how effectively learners apply what they have learnt in their personal, social, physical, cognitive, moral, psychological and emotional development. In order to understand curriculum, it is therefore important to consider the three main processes of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation.

An evaluation of multiple HIV education studies conducted by Kirby, Laris and Rolleri (2007) found that successful curriculum-based programmes comprise 17 characteristics. These characteristics were grouped in three main areas: on curriculum development (five characteristics); the content of curriculum (eight characteristics); and curriculum implementation including the selection and training of teachers with desired characteristics (four characteristics) (ibid). It is asserted by Aggleton, Dennison and Warwick (2010, p. 361) that a “good quality SE can be a vital resource to provide young people with knowledge and information to address sexual and reproductive health and to prevent adverse social, health and educational outcomes”. The new wave of SE which is now veering towards CSE (UNESCO et al., 2018; WHO Europe and BZgA, 2010; UNFPA, 2014; UNESCO, 2016; Pound et al., 2017) also has several characteristics that focus on the preparatory stages; the development of content; and implementation.

During the preparatory phase, it is asserted by curriculum theorists that an effective curriculum development process should be led by curriculum specialists and be well-planned and systematic. Thus, it needs to be a transparent and publicly known process
which should involve specific experts on sexuality, behaviour change, and related pedagogical theories. Experts who are knowledgeable in the specific subject area and who understand the risky behaviour of young people, will help ensure that programmes/interventions that are developed are developed with relevant pedagogical content and activities. In a review of interventions with parents to promote the sexual health of their children, Wight and Fullerton (2013) reported that the greatest impact on improving sexual health of their children was evident when they were involved in constructing it. Young people are part of a wider society and as such there are various circumstances, settings and cultural values that will affect what their sexual needs and behaviours are. The opinions of those (young people, parents and community) who will benefit from the curriculum should equally be sought. Not only does this facilitate how the curriculum will be taken up, but it can also help clarify how the curriculum could be used by different groups be they peers, teachers, etc. to help them organise appropriate activities. Parents and communities are most likely to encourage their children to participate in such lessons if they feel a sense of ownership.

Developing the content requires having a clear focus on the goals, outcomes and key learnings which will then help determine the content, pedagogic approach and activities (which all take account of the different learners’ varying abilities). So, for instance, the aim of LS[B]E would therefore be to prevent further transmissions of HIV which could be interpreted as a health-related goal, leading to specific behavioural outcomes that should be directly related to the health goals. Kirby (2007) further advise that topics should be covered in an appropriate and logical sequence, first focusing on encouraging students to explore values, attitudes and norms concerning sexuality and then building these up into more concrete areas. These can then help design appropriate activities that are context-oriented, thereby promoting critical thinking. Another area that is highlighted as well is around consent, which it is believed is essential for building healthy and respectful relationships and healthy sexual behaviours through the understanding and respecting of other people’s boundaries (IPPF and World Association for Sexual Health, 2016). The concept of consent also helps with the identification of any unwanted or unprotected sexual intercourse which might lead to unwanted pregnancies and STIs including HIV.

Also, providing scientifically accurate information about HIV and AIDS and other STIs, pregnancy prevention and availability of health services is crucially important. With many countries offering abstinence-only curricula, there is more likelihood that such curricula
will therefore include inaccurate or incomplete information regarding issues such as gender roles and expectations, homosexuality, abortion, sexual intercourse, and masturbation (UNFPA, 2014). Most importantly, how young people experience and navigate their sexuality and their SRH should also be generally addressed as this will help them understand their sexualities and how they need to react. Gender discrimination for instance, is common, and this emphasises young women’s lack of power or control in their relationships which in turn makes them more vulnerable to coercion, abuse and exploitation (Secor-Turner, Schmitz and Benson, 2016). Addressing the specific risks and protective factors that affect specific sexual behaviours is also key to be included in curricula as this helps prepare young people for what to look out for and how to prevent adverse consequences, e.g., how to prevent STIs or act upon symptoms; and how to prevent pregnancy and gender-based violence (GBV).

There are so many misconceptions that affect attitudes of young people towards the use of contraceptives and condoms. It is therefore imperative that the curriculum content should clarify these areas including any challenges they may face in acquiring such services. Past research on curriculum content (Kirby, 2012; UNESCO and UNFPA, 2012) also suggests it should have close links with local SRH services as well as allowing the possibility of bringing in medical experts to help with some of the lessons. When young people have awareness of the links between what they learn and SRH services, they are more likely to also seek professional help should they need to access to for instance, pregnancy testing clinics, or STI clinics. Not only will bringing the knowledge and reality to services help them know when and which services they can access but they can also encourage peers or partners to access these services when they need them (IPPF and World Association for Sexual Health, 2016). All such characteristics are, at the same time, affected by whether the subject itself is integrated or a stand-alone.

2.5.2 HIV and AIDS education pedagogic approaches

As with most curriculum reforms, there is also the perception that modifications to the pedagogical practice in the classroom is expected, despite the classrooms having their own characteristics and structures which are shaped by, among other things, the interaction between the teachers and the learners (Claessens et al., 2017). The term ‘life skills education’ itself calls for scrutiny what the appropriate pedagogies that comprise of critical thinking in order to encompass of knowledge, attitudes and skills which are
considered keys to adopting or changing sexual behaviour for the prevention of HIV transmissions. As such, the LS[B]E pedagogy approach encourage active participation of learners, critical thinking, and learning through experience.

WHO’s ‘Skills for Health: Skills based health education including life skills’ Manual provides a wide range of theories of human development and adolescent behaviour. Amongst the many theories, the most prominent theories used are from the child and adolescent development theories (Piaget, 1971); and the social learning theory or social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). The former theories focus on the biological changes that take place between childhood and adolescence. As pointed out by Paiget (1971), adolescents are then able to conceptualise simultaneously on the multiple variables, thinking abstractly, and thereby creating problem-solving rules. These provide the process where the learners are able to understand themselves, others and relationships. On the other hand, Bandura concluded that children learn to behave both through formal instruction (i.e., through teachers, parents and other authorities and role models) and through observations (i.e., young people’s perceptions of how adults and peers behave).

Kirby (2007) continues to state that during implementation itself, a good curriculum should include multiple teaching and learning methods so that different students with different abilities are able to participate. LSE demands an experiential learner-centred type of learning, and this is not unusual for school reforms as reported by Alexander and Murphy (1998). Where there is a variety of teaching and learning methods, students should be able to feel comfortable, and the appropriate infrastructure and resources need to be in place to enable this process. Likewise, SRHE as an integrated topic, therefore, demands a learner-centred pedagogical approach, which enables students to be active and visible in constructing their own knowledge, where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008). As Wilmot (2012) points out, this type of pedagogy is synonymous with a progressive educational discourse of human rights and social justice, enabling the emancipatory and democratic ideology.

As such, these methods are mostly participatory, which include class discussions, brainstorming activities, role-playing, small group/buzz, games and simulations, situation analysis and case studies, debates, story-telling. It is worth highlighting here that LS[B]E does not entail one specific pedagogy, but rather, a variety of different pedagogies and
‘strategies’ useful at different times. The general understanding here is that classroom activities should offer the learners opportunities to engage with peers and teachers in a meaningful way. Some of the ways of engaging involve the use of physical movement and ‘questions/comments’ techniques, for example, asking learners to agree/disagree with statements where they should justify their position; analysing posters; the use of positive feedback including explaining why students may have provided a good idea.

It is equally important to ensure that there is appropriate monitoring, supervision and support provided for the teachers who are specifically delivering SRE. International research on good SRE (Strasburger and Brown, 2014) found that many teachers still do not have adequate resources and/or backing to provide students with the breadth of information they need.

2.5.3 Gender and SRHE

Advances in SE have contributed to a discursive shift away from understanding SE or CSE solely as a public health issue, considering the sociocultural, political and legal contexts, with more attention being paid to gender (Sundaram and Sauntson, 2016), plurality (Todd, 2011; Allen, 2011), sexuality (Quinlivan, 2017) and power (Brook, 2013; Ollis, Harrison and Maharaj, 2013). The role of schools as a site for SRH promotion is widely acknowledged (Short, 1998; World Bank, 2002; UNESCO at al., 2018), with school-based prevention programmes identified as a priority (Sundaram and Sauntson, 2016). Epstein and Johnson (1998) also point out that schools are places where sexual and other identities are developed, practices and actively produced. However, as observed earlier, schools have also been seen as places where dangerous ‘unhealthy’ practices take place, supporting old studies by Oakley, Fullerton and Holland (1995); as well as places where SRGBV is not unusual. SRGBV has been defined by UNGEI and UNESCO (2015) as acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. SRGBV is commonly categorized as psychological, physical, and sexual, although there is important overlap between these areas. Psaki, Mensch and Soler-Hampejsek (2017) report that SRGBV is a common experience for both boys and girls in Malawi, with sexual violence being linked to worse education outcomes in schools, especially for boys, and domestic violence disrupting schooling for both boys and girls.
According to Moyer (2009) research has documented the pervasive effects of gender inequality in curriculum and pedagogy. For example, in their study of school culture on contradictions in curriculum interventions in Uganda, Mirembe and Davies (2001) reported schools as places of control which happened through hegemonic masculinity (e.g., the general assumption that leaders should be men unlike women), gendered discipline patterns (e.g., differentiating between a boy or a girl especially around discipline), sexual harassment (e.g., where one group has control over another group), and ‘compulsory’ heterosexuality (e.g., through a systematic socialization of boys and girls including what is expected in heterosexual relationships). As such, they concluded through their study that such types of control undermine pupil self-efficacy thereby reducing the likelihood of them adopting health-seeking behaviours.

Equally, textbooks, may be seen to re-emphasise femininity and hegemonic masculinity discourses through pictures, descriptions, etc. In an Athenian study conducted by Kostas (2021) on children’s discursive agency and polysemy of narratives, it was found that some of the gender-normative discursive representations in the textbooks could equally have deleterious impacts on learners’ gender identities. This resonates with a study conducted in Uganda’s health campaign on discourses of masculinity and femininity from which Rudrum, Oliffe and Benoit (2016) reported that specific representations, through posters, portrayed hegemonic masculinity notions of appearance- and performed-based heterosexual masculinity, thereby reproducing existing unsafe norms in this area of sexuality.

Malawi is generally a patriarchal society and as such girls are expected to be answerable to their fathers and once married, to their husbands. This clearly creates a power imbalance between the sexes and promotes the belief that girls and women are inferior to boys and men. Hence there is protectionism that favours girls than boys, which could be translated into girls being helplessness and seen as victims. Such unhelpful perceptions have an effect as to how teachers and learners interact with each other at classroom level. Kelly (1992) equally points out that curriculum, in addition to controlling knowledge, can also serve to reproduce gender roles as well as the dominant forms of sexuality.
2.5.4 HIV and AIDS education teacher preparation

In addition to the development of the curriculum, it is equally important to ensure that the teachers are appropriately trained in order for them to facilitate students’ learning of HIV transmission and prevention. While the integration of HIV and AIDS education curriculum has shown that the focus has mainly been on teachers’ HIV knowledge (Gingiss and Basen-Engquist, 1994), emphasis is continuously being placed on teachers’ attitudes towards SRH (Kaaya et al., 2002) and how they interact with, and manage students in the classrooms (Schaalma et al., 2004; Mathews et al., 1995). Theory plays an important role in determining the nature of educational research and practice in teacher education as asserted by Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 8) who states that “One of the perennial dilemmas of teacher education is how to integrate theoretically based knowledge that has traditionally been taught in university classrooms with the experience-based knowledge that has traditionally been located in the practice of teachers and the realities of classrooms and schools”. Teachers are dependent on practices that are the product of ideological and political constructs as well as on critical reflection on their practice in the classroom. Teachers are trained to expose and examine the beliefs, assumptions and values implicit in ideological and political agendas which often determine how they organise their experiences and practices in the classroom (Errington, 2004).

Teachers are therefore expected, after their preparation, to have acquired the necessary theoretical astuteness in order to interact critically with those cultural, political, social and economic concerns which impact either positively or negatively on their classroom practice, thereby bringing in the links between theory and practice. Teacher preparation therefore puts them in an appropriate position as sources of accurate information with whom young people can then raise any sensitive and/or complicated issues around SRH (Boscarino and DiClemente, 1996). According to Blake (2008), Goldman and Goldman (1988) the significance of sexuality knowledge to health and wellbeing means that teachers have an obligation to ensure their educational responses to children’s SE are open, accurate, and of the highest quality.

2.6 Malawi’s approaches to sexuality education

As mentioned in Chapter One above, SRH and HIV and AIDS education in Malawi is generally offered through LSE and Biology subjects. The Malawian education sector acknowledges that HIV and AIDS are a major threat to the health and welfare of its
teachers, lecturers, learners and support staff at all levels as well as to the general society. As a result, it is envisaged that the HIV and AIDS education strategy will have a wide coverage in the course of implementation and will involve key stakeholders in both the public and private sectors (MoEST, 2014).

Malawi’s 2015-2020 HIV Prevention Strategy focuses on delivering behaviour change interventions including LSE, promotion of faithfulness, use of male and female condoms, and activities that address gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination and harmful cultural practices (NAC, 2015; MANET, 2012). All education in Malawi is mainly guided by the Malawi Education Act and the Malawi Education Policy. Along with other policies, HIV and AIDS prevention initiatives including education are, in addition, specifically guided by the Malawi National HIV and AIDS Framework and the Malawi National HIV and AIDS Sector Plan (which are then translated into the Malawi HIV and AIDS Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector). While there are other additional policies that also impact on HIV and AIDS education, this thesis only discusses these two policies while the other related policies can be found in Appendix 13.

According to Kishindo, Mzumara and Katundu (2006), Malawi first introduced LSE as a subject in 1999 when it was piloted in 24 primary schools focusing on Standard 4 only as most learners dropped out of school once they reached Standard 5. LSE was initially introduced to empower children with appropriate information and skills in the fight against HIV infections as well as to empower them to deal with everyday challenges like early unwanted pregnancies. In 2001 and 2003, MoEST rolled out the implementation of LSE in all primary and secondary schools respectively as an elective subject, and only became an examinable subject in 2010. In addition to LSE, there are out of school curricular activities for those students who are not in school. For instance, there are out of school clubs, like AIDS Toto Club, which cater for out-of-school adolescents. The main objective of LSE in Malawi as stated by MoEST and MIE (2013, p. vii) is therefore “to develop students who can integrate their knowledge, feelings, attitudes, values and skills to live their lives to their full potential”. Furthermore, LSE provides students with “the opportunity to develop skills and motivation to function efficiently and effectively in society” (ibid). These key skills include: self-awareness; empathy; communication skills; interpersonal relationships; creative and critical thinking; problem-solving; decision making; coping with stress and emotions; resisting peer pressure; peaceful conflict
Malawi’s LSE has six core elements (MoEST and MIE, 2013, p. vii) with different outcomes as follows:

1. **Personal development**: students will be able to develop their self-awareness and self-esteem to achieve their personal potential.
2. **Growth and development**: students will be able to appreciate how growth and development affect their behaviour and interpersonal relationships, and acquire the skills needed to deal with the challenges of growing up.
3. **Health promotion**: students will be able to make informed decisions about their personal health and demonstrate health-seeking behaviour in the community and wider environment, with particular attention to hygiene, sanitation, and prevalent diseases.
4. **Social and moral development**: students will be able to live and interact socially and morally as members of a family, group, community and nation, in accordance with gender and disability, equity and individual rights and responsibilities.
5. **Sex and sexuality**: students will be able to acknowledge their value as sexual beings and appreciate their sexuality, by making informed choices.
6. **Entrepreneurship and the world of work**: students will be able to demonstrate how to access the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed for socio-economic and occupational development in society.

In addition to the provision of LSE, a selected number of Christian-aided schools implement an alternative (Christian-based) curriculum – ‘Why Wait Life Skills (WWLS)’ – which seeks to address problems currently faced by youth. WWLS is a donor-funded curriculum which is run by the Sub-Saharan Africa Family Enrichment (SAFE) Project. The curriculum aims to: educate schoolchildren and the youth of Africa on what it interprets to be God’s principles of character, moral development and sexual purity; introduce them to Christianity and its principles in order to develop a ‘godly’ self-concept; show how God can empower them to withstand social and sexual pressures; enable them to live in sexual abstinence until marriage; and subsequently implement God’s principles of family life in order to pass the blessings on to the next generation. The WWLS assumes all youth should abstain from pre-marital sex so that they can make informed decisions.

The WWLS curriculum encourages both youth and families to implement what it interprets
as God's perspective on the ‘A, B, C’ of HIV and AIDS prevention: ‘Abstinence’ is seen to affirm both the dignity and responsibility of human sexuality, while ‘Be faithful’ aims to build strong supportive families that can support abstinence. ‘C’ stands for maintaining a ‘Christ-like Character’, which the curriculum asserts is to demonstrate control, commitment and compassion, and allow one to enjoy true companionship. The WWLS curriculum uses the Chichewa translation for condom, i.e., ‘chishango’ [shield], to literally emphasise that ‘God’ or ‘the LORD’ is my ‘shield’ (as in Psalm 18:2 in the Bible). The word ‘chishango’ is thereby attributing the interpretation of ‘God’s perspective’ and the expected outcomes of the ABCs to the curriculum itself. However, such a curriculum has been criticised by others in the field (Munthali, Mvula and Maluwa-Banda, 2013) for not promoting a human rights perspective, on the basis that students are denied being sexually active, and therefore have no right to appropriate SR information. The lessons centre around the pursuit of pleasure through God’s view of sex with a central belief that God protects our sexuality and that there are consequences should they decide to have premarital sex.

2.6.1 Malawi National HIV and AIDS Framework and the Malawi National HIV and AIDS Sector Plan

Malawi’s National HIV and AIDS Framework (NAF) covered the period 2005-2009 and was later extended in 2009 to cover the period 2010-2012. In 2012 a new National HIV and AIDS Sector/ Plan (NSP) was developed covering the period 2012-2016. The NSP and the NAF have the same goal and same priority areas, with the focus being on the prevention of HIV transmission, and treatment improvement, care, and support for the infected and affected populations. Unlike the NAF, the NSP has interventions for key populations and new interventions such as circumcision and integrated ART/prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes, and has a comprehensive results framework. In addition, interventions for men having sex with men (MSM) have now also been included, despite the controversy surrounding the criminalization and stigmatization of same-sex practices (Wirtz et al., 2013). The development of the multisectoral strategic plan was developed with full participation of CSOs (from key populations such as PLHIV, sex workers, MSM, and more recently young people (Bekker, 2019)) who contributed ideas towards developing the Plan. These Malawian CSOs/CBOs - members of the Malawi HIV and AIDS Partnership Forum (MPF), technical working groups (TWGs), as well as part of the NAC Board and Malawi Global Fund Coordinating Committee (MGFCC) - were
considered to be implementation partners.

The 2012-2016 Plan had a new costed and results-oriented strategy guiding the national HIV and AIDS response. This plan was developed with full participation of all the stakeholders from the public and private sectors, development partners and CSOs as outlined above. At national level, Malawi also developed the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP). The NSP is aligned with the HSSP, and both applied to the period 2011-2016. Malawi also included new interventions targeting key populations such as Option B+\(^9\), voluntary medical male circumcision, MSM and sex workers. There is also a comprehensive and reliable monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for the health sector focusing on biomedical HIV interventions (for example, PMTCT, HTC and ART) although there are questions around the system’s cost and sustainability. Other key achievements include the rapid scale up of PMTCT and ART services and the conduct of the Legal Environment Assessment report, both of which link to the NSP and the National HIV Policy. According to UNDP (2017), the long-deliberated HIV Bill, which had the potential to be a major legal barrier to an effective HIV response in the country, was rejected by parliament. The bill included provisions to make HIV testing and treatment mandatory for certain populations and sought to criminalise HIV exposure and intentional transmission. It should be emphasised that Malawi has no legal restrictions that discriminate against people living with HIV entering and residing in the country.

2.6.2 Contextualising how the Malawi education system works

Malawi, like many other countries, committed itself to the Education for All (EFA) goals in 1990 which entailed providing universal primary education (Colclough and Lewin, 1993). This was followed by free primary education in 1994 after the democratic elections of a new government (Kunje, 2002). The GoM (2020) through the MoEST is responsible for the central education administration, and for formulating and implementing standards, policies, plans and strategies in public education. MoEST also formulates, implements and monitors the education budget as well as planning and conducting training programmes, developing curricula, conducting supervision and managing the quality of education. As much as it is responsible for hiring teachers, the different provinces and divisions are

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\(^9\) Option B+ was the universal lifelong ART for pregnant and breastfeeding women which was implemented in Malawi in 2011 (Rosenberg and Pettifor, 2018).
looked after by teachers in each district through the Education Division Offices which are located in six educational divisions with 34 District Education Officers who are responsible for regional education administration (MoEST, 2015).

The MoEST is led by the minister, two deputy ministers (one responsible for basic and secondary education and the other responsible for higher education), one secretary and two principal secretaries. MoEST has eight directorates: Finance and Administration; Educational Planning; Basic Education; Secondary Education; Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS); Teacher Education and Development (DTED); Higher Education; and Technical and Vocational Training (MoEST, 2008). In addition, there are organisations that are also affiliated with MoEST which include: the Malawi College of Distance Education; Malawi Institute of Education (MIE); Domasi College of Education; and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). The main official language of instruction for Malawi’s education is English at all levels even though more recently, mother tongue has been used as a medium of instruction in early primary (Kamwendo, 2019). Education in Malawi is offered at four different levels, i.e. early childhood care (for 0-5 year olds) (which encompasses pre-primary education), primary education (for 6-13 year olds), secondary education (for 14-18 year olds), and tertiary education (18-23 year olds) which encompasses university education, technical and vocational education as well as adult literacy (for 15+ year old adults who missed the opportunity of primary education), and out-of-school youth education (for out-of-school youths). Though the GoM is the main provider of education, there are also private institutions that offer education within the country.

Primary education comprises eight years with grades 1 to 8 and secondary education spans four years (with Forms 1 to 4). Higher education generally is between four to five years depending on the course being undertaken. In order for the learners to proceed to the next grade, it is mandatory to pass end of year examinations and there are main national examinations which are set at two different stages, i.e., at the end of primary education (Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSLCE)), and at the end of secondary school in Form 4 (Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE)). These examinations are set by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) and if students fail these exams, they are expected to repeat the same class. Similarly, for the rest of the years where

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10 This previously took place over three stages, with an additional stage between PSLCE and MSCE which was the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE). This was undertaken halfway through secondary school and was later abolished in 2015 to promote the practice of continuous assessment.
MANEB exams are not held, teachers will set end of term as well as end of year exams and students follow the same process, i.e., if they pass, they proceed to the next class and if not, they are expected to repeat that same class.

The study was conducted during the previous vision for the education sector in Malawi, i.e., the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (MoEST, 2008) (see Appendix 13), which was later replaced by the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) 2020-2030, which is not drawn from under this study though could provide a good starting point for future research. These frameworks were to be used as catalysts for socio-economic development and industrial growth, and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless, in addition to providing guidance for quality and relevant education to enable people to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, expertise and competencies to perform effectively as citizens, as a workforce and as leaders of Malawi.

Expanding access to primary education has traditionally been a priority for the GoM since the introduction of FPE in 1994. This emphasis on increased enrolment and retention at primary school level inevitably increased demand for secondary school places. Accordingly, the government policy gave increased importance to raising the enrolment in secondary education from 17% in 2005 (of which 43% were girls) to 30% by 2012, of which 50% were girls, as stipulated in the Education Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) (MoEST, 2001). This also included an increased role for both the private sector and community involvement in the provision of secondary education.

Malawi’s secondary education is offered mainly through five types of schools, i.e., conventional secondary schools (CSSs), community day secondary schools (CDSSs), open (distance) schools (run by government through Malawi College of Distance Education), grant aided secondary schools (the government provides some support, but they are run by independent boards), and private secondary schools (Chingaipe, Nthakomwa and Katundu, 2018). CSSs (which include boarding and day schools) are government supported schools and are the most privileged with regard to educational infrastructure and quality of teaching staff. As at the end of 2017 CSSs enrolled 42,734 students, 41% of whom were girls. GoM’s policy also makes provision for the promotion and strengthening of secondary education programmes involving CDSSs as part of access improvement though entry is dependent on PSLCE outcome. These CDSSs mostly cater for the neediest segment of the secondary school age group in the most deprived areas, where there were previously no
CSSs. Priority is also given to the provision of continuing education for the under-qualified teachers who staff these schools. As of 2019, there were a total of 582 secondary schools (both urban and rural) with a total of 13,449 teachers of which 7,899 were properly trained secondary school teachers, out of which 3,054 were in CDSSs (GoM, 2015).

CDSSs, previously known as Distance Education Centres (DECs) are established with community assistance and they are the most disadvantaged in terms of resources and quality of teaching staff. There was a total of 575 CDSSs as at 2017 (308 approved and 206 yet to be approved) with an enrolment of 99,172 students, 41% of whom were girls. Although the proportion of girls in secondary school education has increased over the years and some policies and actions to promote girls’ education in secondary schools have been put in place, there is still a need to examine more deeply the issues related to further expanding access for girls and improving their retention in schools. The CDSSs enrol 67% of the total government students. The third group of schools are open schools, sometimes known as night schools. These offer secondary school learning opportunities by distance learning to those that for one reason or another (e.g., dropout due to pregnancy) could not be enrolled in other types of education. As of 2017, there were currently 44 open schools enrolling 6,939 learners representing 3% of the population with a 50-50 gender ratio.

The fourth type of secondary schools are the grant-aided ones. These are owned by non-profit organisations (mostly churches) and are also supported by government and are of a similar quality to CSSs, in some cases better. There are 45 grant-aided schools enrolling 12,370 students, 51% of whom are girls. The students in the grant-aided schools make up about 6% of the secondary school enrolment. The fifth category is that of private schools that are managed by individual entrepreneurs with no subsidy from government. The majority of these private schools are comparable to CDSSs from the point of view of the available teaching/learning resources. There were 289 registered private schools in 2017 enrolling 48,750 students, 47% of whom were girls. Students in the registered private schools make up 23% of secondary enrolment. No accurate statistics are available for the number of students attending unregistered private secondary schools.

In addition to the low access problems in relation to secondary school education, the quality of education being provided especially in CDSSs is considered to be sub-standard (MoEST and MIE, 2015) and consequently affects the examinations results which are taken
as one of the standard measurements of quality. The low quality of education can be partly attributed to inadequate numbers of qualified teachers, insufficient teaching and learning materials, shortage of teaching facilities, and deficient school management and supervision (GoM, 2015). In addition to all these challenges, the disparities among boys and girls still exist in terms of learning outcomes as more boys continue to pass the MSCE compared to girls. The education system loses a significant number of girls with different levels of education due to drop-outs or repetitions as they progress through the different grades in primary school. This produces a low girl intake at secondary level and consequently at tertiary education level.

### 2.6.3 Teacher Training and Development in Malawi

UNESCO (2014) report that the quality of education is often undermined by untrained or insufficiently trained teachers who have to deal with overcrowded classrooms with very little resources. Teacher education was therefore a critical factor in meeting the learners’ needs so that the EFA and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (now SDGs) were met. It is asserted by Singh and Sarkar (2015) that teaching quality is an amalgamation of both teacher characteristics and inputs (such as professional qualifications, personal experience and values, place of residence, in-service training), in addition to what the teacher does and demonstrates in the classroom through their practices, attitudes and content.

Teaching practices, which are affected by teacher training, are the specific actions and discourses that take place within a lesson and that physically enact the pedagogic approach and strategy (Westbrook et al., 2013). MoEST is responsible for the training teachers in Malawi through teacher training colleges and a teacher development programme which includes college pre-service training, in-service training which includes school-based continuous professional development, mentorship, workshops and online courses; while the Department of Teacher Education (DTED) is responsible for leadership for teacher training in LSE, while DIAS provides quality assurance (GoM, 2020). Primary school teachers undergo a blended 2-year training (resident between training college and teaching at school); whereas there are different training models for secondary school teachers, i.e., 3-year training for a diploma; 4-year training for a degree; or via an upgraded blended model of primary teacher training and open and distance education. In addition,
introduction of FPE, which was forged by Malawi’s political race to its first multi-party election in 1994 increased primary school enrolments from 1.8 million (in 1992-1993) to 2.9 million (in 1994-1995) (MoE, 1997), increasing it by 53% and creating a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 80:1 (World Bank, 2009), thereby demanding an alternative fast-track teacher training for 18,000 new recruits despite inadequate capacity of 3,000 at training colleges at the time (Kunje, 2002).

In response, MoEST welcomed development actors with alternative teacher training initiatives over the years, including Initial Primary Teacher Education (IPTE), Malawi Special Teacher Education Programme (MASTEP) which later changed to Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme (MIITEP) (Steiner-Khamsi and Kunje, 2011), Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) (Kunje, Lewin and Stuart, 2003), etc. which were introduced as blended models of campus-based and open and distance teacher education. Most of these projects trained teachers who ended up being placed in CDSSs. The implication of having varied teacher education programmes of course is that teachers may possibly perceive each other differently, thereby affecting how they teach and interact with students.

In a bid to continue reducing PTR, MoEST continued to increase the number of trained teachers by 15% annually between 2011 and 2015 focusing on subjects that were short of teachers, in a new radical way while providing both pre- and in-service training. The changes included the addition of four teacher training colleges in rural areas. Additionally, specific recommendations were emphasised in the following areas: ensuring only the best teachers are recruited; improving their education for the benefit of the children; relocating teachers where they are most needed; and ensuring teachers are retained through the provision of incentives (UNESCO, 2014). Ndalama and Chidalengwa (2010) however note that the supply of teachers was based on aggregate district enrolment, rather than school requirements, highlighting the inefficiencies in teacher deployment, which according to Mulkeen (2006) in his study of teacher deployment revealed the urban bias with larger cities having surpluses whereas rural schools have less teachers.

As much as the GoM has taken the initiative through the implementation of HIV and AIDS education, questions have been raised as to what extent these teachers have been exposed to specific HIV and AIDS prevention training in order to deliver LS[B]E (MIE, 2012).
Studies conducted by Altinyelken (2010a) and Ma et al. (2009) of how teachers react towards curriculum reforms including the provision of teaching resources, have shown that even though there is enthusiasm amongst teachers when there are curriculum reforms, some teachers did not have the necessary understanding or support to implement the curriculum as intended and as such the new practices were not well implemented. While DIAS has played a leading role in LSE teacher training, there are reports that helping teachers to overcome embarrassment and how they deal with sensitive topics still needs more attention as there is an assumption that through training, teachers should be equipped and have gained sufficient knowledge for classroom practice (GoM, 2020). In addition, the same report indicates that though a total of 40,482 teachers have received in-service LSE training between 2001 and 2010, which still leaves a lot to be trained; those who attended the training indicated that the duration of the training was inadequate for the amount of information that needed to be absorbed. As most of such teaching programmes have been initiated by donors in these different SSAn contexts, there is often an enthusiasm (from the donors) for new pedagogy which often contradicts what teachers are used to. Donors on the one hand advocate for learner-centred approaches whereas teachers on the other hand, in addition to their professional roles, have to deal with different cultural expectations within the communities in which they serve (Kunjie, 2002).

Many forms of teacher training in countries like Malawi often have their origins in colonial practice, which may or may not have been sensitive to the demands placed on the public budget through the cost of the training (Akyeampong and Lewin, 2002). Malawi’s teaching, just like in other SSAn countries, as reported by Akyeampong (2002) on a study on teacher practices in SSA including Malawi, is mainly characterised by its authoritarian, teacher-centred approaches which are usually linked to behaviourist learning approaches. Malawi teaching is also informed by the umunthu ethics, which encourages national consciousness, as well as a global consciousness; thereby emphasizing global citizenship. Teacher training can be costly for most LMICs’ governments due to the length of the training itself. In Malawi for instance, trainee teachers receive a monthly allowance in addition to their accommodation costs. Malawi has one of the highest teacher attrition rates due to HIV and AIDS (MoE, 2015) and as such, teachers are often in high demand.

In order to help resolve some of the general curriculum challenges, including pedagogical
challenges faced in the sector, as well as shortages in specific skills that were required, e.g., agriculturalists, scientists, doctors, engineers, etc., curriculum reforms were implemented as described below in detail, including reference to the other reforms that have taken place before up to the time of the study.

2.6.4 Curriculum Reforms in Malawi: Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR) and Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Reform (SSCAR)

Malawi’s education major reforms included the development plan of 1973-1980 (which took place after gaining independence) which prioritised secondary and tertiary education with the objective of providing middle level personnel to fill posts left by the colonial government. The second reforms took place between 1985 and 1995 and this shifted attention from secondary and tertiary education to primary education. Its objective was to increase access, equity and relevance across primary education (Swainson et al., 1998). The Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation (PFPA) identified low enrolment - due to school fees and limited facilities as well as poor quality attributed to inadequate resources and inappropriate curricula - as being amongst causes of poverty, hence education was perceived as a catalyst for poverty reduction, through increased productivity, with free primary education becoming a focus for government policy following 1994 elections (Kadzamira and Rose, 2001; 2003).

The national education policy, the Policy Investment Framework (PIF) for 2000 to 2015 was approved in 2002 in order to reach goals in education set forth in Vision 2020, a national long-term development strategy created in 2000, and to accomplish Education for All (EFA) goal) by 2015, though it was later criticized for a lack of critical analysis of the education situation. The PIF outlined 5 main objectives which were i) increasing access to education, ii) alleviating existing inequalities across social groups and regions, iii) maintaining and improving the quality and relevance of education, iv) developing an institutional and financial framework and v) increasing the sources of finance for the education sector such as the communities and the private sector (JICA, 2011). In order to achieve the goals of the PIF, the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) for 2008 to 2017 was prepared as a mid-term plan of the education sector, with support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In addition, the Education Sector
Implementation Plan (ESIP) for 2009 to 2013 was made to accomplish the goals set forth in each subsector of the NESP. According to some of the major NESP indicators shown in the ESIP Monitoring Plan, MoEST sought to achieve 88% net enrollment rate (NER) compared to 79% in 2009, 76.2% completion rate (72.6% in 2009), 5% repetition rate (19.16% in 2009) and 0% dropout rate (8.42% in 2009), all in primary education by 2013 through implementation of the ESIP. It was out of these that a number of key reforms were recommended including the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Review (PCAR) and the Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Review (SSCAR).

According to Chimombo (1999), Malawi’s ambitious education reform of FPE in 1994 following the democratic elections was “was not only a response by the newly elected leaders to the popular demand for education from the electorate but was also perceived as the main instrument for a more egalitarian society, for expanding and modernising the economy, and as an essential element in the development process” (p. 117). The main objective of this was to expand access to primary education by reducing the direct costs of education to households, and to make it more relevant. In addition, donors equally supported the role education played in poverty reduction (Rose and Dyer, 2008). All this took place before a comprehensive policy framework had been developed to examine resources and the implications of FPE. After this, secondary education reform was introduced with the main objective of increasing access and improving equity.

In summary, the major reforms that were introduced since 1994 included: the abolition of primary education school fees; the elimination of the requirement for school uniform; the use of mother-tongue language as a medium of instruction in early primary; the introduction of school fee waivers for girls in secondary school; and the unification of the secondary school system through the merging of conventional government secondary schools and Distance Education Centres (DECs) into one system (Kadzamira and Rose, 2001). The recognition that primary education was not sufficient in NESP (2008-2017) as argued that “in an evolving and changing world of education, there is no way basic education can be taken as a complete transformer of our society when the world at large is getting mor complex and sophisticated” (GoM, 2015: iv), symbolized the importance of ensuring that the social context was revolving and that the transition from primary to secondary education needed to have continuity. As such the latter curriculum reforms, PCAR and SSCAR, were introduced, which also helped incorporate the EFA and MDG (now SDG) goals within the curriculum.
The latter curriculum reforms (PCAR and SSCAR) highlighted the need to align learner-centred approaches as part of transition from primary to secondary education. Such constructivist learner-centred discourses are perceived as appropriate for quality teaching as their efficacy is often couched in cognitive terms. According to Vavrus (2009) this pedagogy is “privilege active, inquiry-based learning and student-centred teaching” (p. 204), highlighting the importance of the political and economic developments that started since 1989. Similarly, Tabulawa (2003) and Vavrus (2009) surmise that “contemporary interest in pedagogical reform in sub-Saharan Africa is largely based on economic and political rationales – the need to improve the sub-region’s human capital base as a way of stimulating economic growth and the West’s desire to globalize a liberal democratic ethos” (Tabulawa, 2009, p. 17).

The early 1990s period saw a rise of the involvement of aid agencies that made the adoption of multi-party democracy as a condition for aid and part of structural adjustment programmes that many SSAn countries, including Malawi, had to endure. While the adoption of learner-centred pedagogy is usually expressed in benign and apolitical terms by aid agencies through their justifications of “the pedagogy leads to improvements in learning outcomes and that it is more effective” (Tabulawa, 2009, p. 19), questions still remain as to ‘which learning outcomes’ and ‘effectiveness for what’. Guthrie (2014) attests aid agencies involvement as ‘affective, moral, and philosophical values about desirable psycho-sociological traits for individuals and for society. For instance, according to Mtika and Gates (2010) in Malawi the agendas of EFA and MDGs (now SDGs), have been the main carriers of the pedagogy.

Curriculum reforms have not always been seen to effect change, as is expected due to divergences in curriculum and pedagogy, where impecunious teachers may divert their efforts and place more emphasis on informality and negotiation (Lumadi, 2019). For example, as Mtika and Gates (2010) reported that while “learner-centred pedagogy dominates the curriculum attempts and the rhetoric of teacher education institutions, schools have yet to fully master and adopt this” (p. 554). In addition, when a teacher is faced with over-crowded classrooms, insufficient resources with energetic students who are eager to learn, the teachers may be forced to revert to didactic and authoritarian teaching with little or no recognition of the learners’ potential to construct their own knowledge (c.f. Mtika and Gates, 2010).
Learner-centred pedagogy should therefore be treated as a form of education that is laden with political and economic values due to the different interests of different actors within each context. Curriculum reforms are also seen as technicist in their approach as they are removed from the ones who will implement (teachers) and experience (students), who are expected to make sense of it at classroom level, thereby not focusing on experiential learning. In any case, whether resources are available, teachers and students will rationally choose pedagogical styles that fit their context and purposes, be it examination results and progressing to the next level of education. While these facts are important, this study, however, focuses on the development and implementation process of the LS[B]E curriculum.

2.7 Conceptual underpinning of study

This section discusses the concepts that will be used to help understand the proposed study. This section is therefore split into three different sections discussing: the main conceptual underpinnings of this study (curriculum theory and concepts from structure and agency); and an additional framework to help analyse the classroom enactment (Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives); the relevance of these concepts and framework to the study; and a conclusion.

According to Measor (2004), studies of SE curricula show the lack of specifically articulated theoretical bases, as most of the curriculum content appears to be biologically and reproductively-based. Of course, this is an important part of SRH education (Goldman, 2008) despite its lack of an articulated theoretical basis. Brady and Kennedy (2003, p. 163) assert that “no single curriculum model is followed […] when they develop curriculum at the school level. Curriculum development in practice is eclectic, often tentative, and individual”. However, Miedema et al. (2011, p. 156) offer an alternative conceptual framework for understanding the main approaches to LS[B]E thereby drawing a distinction between approaches which are “‘scientifically’ informed; those that draw upon notions of ‘rights’ and those which are overtly ‘moralistic’ in the sense that they promote conservative moral positions concerning sexuality and sexual acts”.

2.7.1 Curriculum Theory (CT) and Structure and Agency
It has been suggested by Foucault (1988) that governments, through state policies, govern citizens’ actions. Similarly, curriculum development is perceived as the manifestation of the power distribution in society, hence the workings of power and control are shown through any final curriculum’s shape. HIV and AIDS as a virus and disease syndrome are considered by most to fall into the domain of SRH and are thus socially complex issues in which the workings of power and control are often masked by the politics of meaning, social construction and the use of language (Seidel, 1993), e.g., through coordinated discourses of control (of certain sexual behaviours), prevention (of diseases including STIs), and enabling (access to information and services).

The study aims to explore how transnational HIV and AIDS education policies and their application at the national and local levels which are primarily situated in national institutional spaces either contained within or controlled by the state, influence the shape of the LS[B]E curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment at school level. CT operates at three different levels, i.e., society, curriculum, and classroom (Lundgren, 2015; Englund, 2011; Deng and Luke, 2008). Education policy implementation brings the interaction between structure and agency to the fore due to the complex structures, multiple actors, and the ongoing need for improvement. The interplay between structure and agency in curriculum development and implementation is more evident through the different levels of macro (policy), micro (environmentally what is acceptable), and in the classroom (enacted curriculum).

Structures and agents are mutually constitutive entities in curriculum reforms and development, where negotiation processes with certain structural constraints and opportunities take place. Structures can either enable or constrain individual actions. Giddens (1984) defines structure as “rules and resources” (p. 64), i.e., how we understand things should be done. Structure is therefore concerned with policies, the influence of formal organisational structures, and the allocation of resources. Agency on the other hand, describes situated practices, or the temporal capacity of individuals to take actions (Archer, 1996), and is concerned with individual actors. Analysing the study at these levels will inevitably enable me to understand whether the intended curriculum (developed from the policy) is being implemented (as intended) at classroom level and what agents and structures are at play at these different (development and implementation) levels.
Curriculum is increasingly viewed as being foundational to the educational reforms which are aimed at achieving high quality learning outcomes. While curriculum represents a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values (i.e., a selection that shapes the way teaching, learning and assessment processes are organised), it is also understood as a political and social agreement that reflects a society’s common vision, encompassing local, national and international needs and expectations. As such, any curriculum reforms and development processes will require the involvement of various actors such as policymakers, experts, practitioners as well as society at large, each with their different ideas, interests and identities (Scott, 2014). Thus, the consultation and development processes become complex with trying to balance the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the intended curriculum.

Understanding what drives curriculum reforms is one of the major issues that CT tries to explore. It is further concerned with what (if any) local, national and/or international forces and actors play a role in shaping and re-shaping education systems. In addition, Anderson-Levitt (2008) concludes that any convergences and/or divergences are also explored through CT. CT is fundamentally concerned with values, the historical analysis of curriculum, ways of viewing current educational curriculum and policy decisions, and theorising about the curricula of the future (Pinar, 2015). Pinar defines the contemporary field of CT as “the effort to understand curriculum as a symbolic representation”. Rapid changes and uncertainties have, over the past decades, evolved CT into a multi-faceted field which thereby brings with it a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches (Priestley, 2011). While the traditional focus of CT in the past has been about ‘what knowledge is of most worth’, which according to Deng (2015) is a multi-layered question, it also contains different dimensions: epistemology (concerned with different ways of knowing), a normative dimension (concerned with the purpose of schooling), and a practical dimension (concerned with developing the curriculum). Though CT has moved away from the ‘psychological phase’ (Pinar et al., 1995), Schwab (2013) brought to light the importance of linking theory and practice more closely together. The ‘sociological phase’ of CT (Torres and Antikainen, 2003; Whitty, 2010) changed the analytical focus towards the selection and organisation of ‘official knowledge’, and towards how it impacts on cultural reproduction.

Despite all the success CT has enjoyed over time, Simola et al. (2013) still feel that it still falls short of a strong methodological theorisation when it comes to more complex and
non-linear approaches that take place during policy transfer. As asserted by Nordin and Sundberg (2018, p. 822), there is a neo-positivist assumption made about curriculum reform that it follows a linear path between the policy itself and what happens in practice, i.e., that the “construction of policy implementation determines the outcome”. However, CT equally acknowledges that “travelling policies and reforms have multiple and contested meanings” (ibid, p. 822) thereby suggesting that there is a linguistic element, which essentially undermines the functionalist premise that assumes policy transfer and implementation to be a one-way directed process.

In addition to the question of what knowledge is of most worth, neo-Marxists and reconceptualists (like Karl Mannheim, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann) brought an understanding of where different societal forces struggle for dominance. This shifted the task of curriculum theory from that of deconstructing educational practices to that of revealing powerful forces and actors who had their own interests and as a consequence, created and upheld unequal practices leading to an unequal society (cf. Apple, 2014; Pinar et al., 1995; Young, 1971). However, Young (2008, 2013) continues to argue that CT fails to provide a theory of knowledge which is able to contribute in any meaningful way which, according to Young, is misleading as CT then misses out “the continental bildung tradition facilitating theoretical and methodological approaches able to discuss different forms of knowledge, including knowledge content” (Nordin and Sundberg, 2018, p. 821; cf. Deng, 2016; Hopmann and Riquarts, 2000).

It is asserted by Ball (2015) that the salient features of transnational and national education policies are that they ‘govern by numbers’ where monitoring and measuring outcomes is a preferred form of neoliberalism. While different approaches and concepts (like path dependency and isomorphism (Nordin and Sundberg, 2016), externalisation, discourse analysis and network analysis) have merit, there are still some gaps when it comes to exploring curriculum reforms. While these approaches provide valuable knowledge on specific ‘drivers’ of change, they still do not conceptualise these drivers’ interconnectedness and how concepts are being translated and reconfigured or explain how they are moulded within the interplay of these drivers (Nordin and Sundberg, 2018). When linked to curriculum reforms, such insight brings to light that which is of most importance in a given situation, thereby offering tools for analysing how policy inevitably mutates when moving from one place to the other within the different education structures and agents. Furthermore, it gives insights as to what has changed as well as
what has caused those changes.

Human agency is both a much-debated concept with diverse theoretical framings informing it. Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of habitus, Giddens’s (1990) structuration theory and Archer’s (1995) seminal realist social theory and relational theories of agency inspired by, for example, the work of Foucault and Actor-Network Theory have had influence on how agency is understood. Archer sees agency as autonomy and causal efficacy. The overly-individualistic view of agency is rooted in psychological views of human capacity, and indeed humans are “self-motivated, self-directing, rational subject(s), capable of exercising individual agency” (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 2). However, people operate relatively unimpeded by social constraints, and society is epiphenomenal to the individual or group. As such, agency can be perceived to be conflated with the concept of autonomy as a form of freedom from constraints. Archer (2003) argues that structuration assumes that the cultural and structural systems have no objective existence, substituting a form of idealism where discourses are contingent on being sustained by social actors through a process of instantiation, and where sociocultural interaction cannot be analysed independently of cultural and structural systems. Inevitably culture, structure and agency have a relationship of ‘relative causality’ thereby raising the question concerning which are of most importance in a given social interaction. Archer (2003) agrees that the linking of these three then offers a set of tools for analysing how policy inevitably mutates when travelling within educational systems; as well as to what has changed and, on a general level, what aspects have been identified as causally influential.

Structuration on the other hand brings to the fore the relationship between structure and agency, in which concepts such as power, identities, contexts and social systems are illuminated. Giddens (1984) sees structure and agency as symbiotic in a social structure where we exert our own agency and intentionality, creating, producing and reproducing systems through our day-to-day interactions, and in a way those same systems constrain and influence how we behave. Agency is also achieved under particular ecological conditions (Biesta and Tedder, 2007), i.e., even if actors have some kind of capacities, whether they achieve agency depends on the interaction of the capacities and the ecological conditions. Rather than agency being a property or capacity in individuals, it becomes construed in part as an effect of the ecological conditions through which it is enacted, i.e., agency is positioned as a relational effect. So, in this case, agency is a matter of personal capacity to act, combined with contingencies of the environment within which
such action occurs, i.e., an individual may exercise more or less agency at various times and in different settings. Thus, we produce and reproduce both enabling and constraining structures aiding the social production and reproduction of structural conditions such as knowledge, resources, rules, institutional and societal practices (ibid). The structuralist and functionalist view of ‘societal totality’ neglects the importance of human actions in the society. On the other hand, hermeneutic and interpretive sociologists view actions and meanings only in terms of human conduct and experience while ignoring external factors.

Bourdieu’s (1990) habitus which he defines as “systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations” (ibid, p. 53), on the other hand, provides individuals with “predisposed ways of categorizing and relating to familiar and novel situations” (p. 53). Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1990) display an elective affinity when it comes to discussing agency and structure. They both see structure as a medium and outcome of social actions, as they believe that they both constrain practices but are also a result of creative human relationships. Habitus could therefore in this case, be seen as both permeable and responsive to what is going on around them. For instance, teachers may very well be constrained by an education system that has specific expectations of them, but they may well also set conditions that constrain them (e.g., through their own conscious, agential and volitional decisions), reproducing cycles of causality. In this case the teachers are volitionally exerting their agency and enabling the reproduction of the system to opt for a particular set of practices or system.

Bourdieu (1990) further sees habitus as potentially generating a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action. Habitus is therefore embodied and inscribed in the individual’s body and therefore not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions, i.e., people’s relationships to dominant cultures are conveyed in a range of activities, including how they eat, speak, or gesture (Bourdieu, 1984). He further states

“Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to ‘reproduce’ the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products.” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 87).
Despite no explicit rules or principles that dictate behaviour, habitus rather goes hand in hand with “vagueness and indeterminacy” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 78), which resonates with Reay (1995; 2004) who agrees that habitus does regularly excludes certain practices, especially those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs, hence “most improbable practices are rejected as unthinkable, but concomitantly only a limited range of practices are available” (p. 433). Human agents are reflexive and creative and can act counter to societal constraints as well as with societal possibilities. Bourdieu (1984) thus sees habitus as neither the result of free will, not is it determined by structures, but arises from a kind of game between them over time where “dispositions are shaped by past events and structures, and at the same time shape current practices and structures, and even condition our very perceptions of these ... without any deliberate pursuit of coherence ... without any conscious concentration” (p. 170). People’s potential for agency changes in both positive and negative ways as they accumulate experience and as their material and social conditions evolve.

CT implications are therefore important for understanding how policy then changes when being transferred from policymakers to practitioners who have to interpret it into education material (curriculum), and then to the implementers (teachers) who all become part of the “emergence of policy” (Nordin and Sundberg, 2018, p. 823). Palketal (2020) who conducted a study on barriers to HIV treatment reported that international health policy organisations (such as WHO, UNAIDS, PEPFAR) and governments of HIV-afflicted countries in SSA should assess the feasibility of the policies and goals that they propose, as there are different constraining situations in each context that will demand country-specific interventions. Very little is known about such processes let alone the structural conditions under which the different actors have to make these decisions to develop the curriculum that then gets implemented in the schools. Wood and Butt (2014) bring to light how linear curriculum processes are, which they argue, reduce teachers to ‘deliverers’ of content rather than co-creators; this makes it impossible for them to be innovative when delivering the curriculum at classroom level. They further argue that the teachers who are meant to be the co-producers of the curriculum (‘what’) and the implementers who bring changes at classroom level (‘how’) are left with very little choice to be creative and that this makes the learning experience less meaningful. This only emphasises, according to Wood and Butt (ibid), how societal complexity is taken for granted and in the process, very little is known about its character or the role of teachers as agents at different policy
levels.

As much as modernist curricula have contributed widely to policymakers’ as well as curriculum experts’ understanding in the field by revisiting aspects of equal importance such as subject categories, time allocation and resources, they have contributed very little towards why curriculum ideas and/or practices change over time (Nordin and Sundberg, 2018). Hence the need to expand our understanding of CT in terms of what drives the reforms as well as to understand what local, national and international forces and actors play a role in shaping and reshaping these national education systems (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). CT assumes that curriculum reforms are characterised by multiple and sometimes contradictory rationalities of why such change needs to happen. It has been argued by Nordin and Sundberg (2014) that the analysis for understanding curriculum change should include interest in the global processes which are driven by powerful transnational actors as well as national and local contexts which all have their own historical, cultural and political characteristics.

It is for these reasons that this study will then use both CT and concepts of structure and agency to understand the discourses that inform the curriculum development and implementation. For purposes of the thesis, ‘discourse’ here refers to both representation of ideas and the process of idea exchange. Uljens and Ylimaki (2015, p. 39) see curriculum-making discourse as an invitation to self-activity and self-formation within and between different policy levels: “educational leadership as curriculum work recognizes the subject as radically free as this makes him or her able to transcend what is given”. They therefore see curriculum-making not as a matter of implementing ready-made ideas, but rather as an invitation to communicate, to interrupt, and to have one’s own ideas interrupted. It is for this reason that this study then focuses on the three different levels of macro (policy), micro (the curriculum) and the classroom.

2.7.1.1 Relevance of analytical conceptual levels that connect (macro) policy, (micro) curriculum, and classroom to study

The levels of CT and structure and agency (of macro/policy, micro/environmental, and classroom enactment) render themselves to be used as analytical tools due to their complementarity; as Schmidt (2010, p. 15) argues: “without discourse understood as the exchange of ideas, it is very difficult to explain how ideas go from individual thought to
collective action”. Ideas are believed to stem from two sites, i.e., in the background (as underlying assumptions and often less visible and therefore non-negotiable), and in the foreground (as conscious perceptions and more visible and therefore contestable). Cognitive ideas as a background elucidate “what is and what to do” whereas normative ideas as a background indicate “what is good or bad about what is” in the light of “what one ought to do” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 306). Cognitive ideas are also referred to as causal ideas; it is asserted by Jobert (1989), Hall (1993) and Schmidt (2000) that they provide recipes, guidelines and maps for political action and therefore serve to justify policies and programmes as they speak to their interest and logic. Normative ideas on the other hand attach values to political action and serve to legitimate the policies in a programme through reference to their appropriateness (see March and Olsen, 1989).

Both cognitive and normative ideas operate within the three levels of macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and enacted curriculum. At macro level, cognitive ideas offer solutions to problems. The second level of micro/curriculum defines the problems to be resolved through identified methods, with a deeper core of principles and norms. At the third (classroom) level, the relevant scientific disciplines or technical practices are then applied. So, at policy level, normative ideas speak to how policies meet the aspirations and ideals of the general public, and how programmes as well as policies resonate with a deeper core of principles and norms of public life, whether they are newly emerging societal values or the long-standing ones (see Schmidt, 2000). The important questions being addressed are mainly around why some ideas become the policies, programmes, and philosophies that dominate political reality while others do not.

It has been stated by Campbell (2004) that foreground ideas are more visible and thus more likely to be contested as this is where possible debates enable politicians and decision-makers to legitimise their programmes for institutional change on certain specified grounds. In this study this would be around how the general public (specifically on what is perceived as acceptable sexual behaviour for adolescents (main beneficiaries of the developed curriculum) and what can be legitimised while still carrying forward the society’s values and norms. The policy in this case would thus stipulate what is to be the legitimate behaviour. The debates then further stretch to how people should best cognitively solve different types of problems, which in a way could be argued as a way of promoting certain forms of decision making and any institutional changes expected, for instance the actual structure and content of a specific curriculum.
Campbell (ibid) suggests that this communicative discourse, i.e., comprising background and foreground cognitive and normative ideas, has distinct effects on the process of any institutional change. The agents of this communicative discourse include “policy actors, professional actors, parents, media, social movements, students, and even ordinary people through their everyday talk and argumentation” (Schmidt, 2012, p. 102). It is therefore through this “communicative discourse in the policy field where political actors present and argue for their ideas for political legitimation” (ibid: 170).

The two types of communicative discourse that are worth paying attention to, particularly in this study, are the persuasive communication discourse and Habermas’ (1996) deliberative communicative discourse. The persuasive communication discourse is specifically relevant to the political and/or the national authority arena; it is designed to ‘interpret’ a problem and to persuade the public regarding its solution. It could therefore be deduced that it denotes authority and is asymmetrical (one way) communication in which critical voices are absent or do not make themselves heard. The deliberative communicative discourse on the other hand is where conversations among all those concerned with an issue takes place. It may be referred to as a critical deliberation within and outside the school as an institution reflecting the meanings of policy discourses and key concepts. Deliberative communicative discourse also contains persuasive elements which are open to more symmetrical and reciprocal contestations and counter arguments.

Bernstein’s (2000) recontextualisation principle furthers my understanding of how educational policy texts are shaped by multiple recontextualising agencies, including teachers’ enactment of such policies in the schools. In an era where classrooms have increasingly become sites of complex and unpredictable social interaction, teacher and student interactions are of importance. Of course, a transformation occurs once a discourse moves from its original site into a pedagogic arena, where different elements of the discourse’s meaning are selectively appropriated, relocated and/or refocused thereby creating new meanings. Such recontextualisations then contribute towards theorisations of power and control in the policy process (as reported by Singh, Thomas and Harris, 2013).

Adopting the levels in CT and structure and agency as described above will facilitate a
better understanding of the persuasive and deliberative communicative HIV and AIDS education policy discourses, specifically on the macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and classroom levels. These levels will hopefully contribute towards an ongoing conceptual understanding of curriculum reforms. Using these categories, the study can therefore attempt to investigate the LS[BE] knowledge focus of the curriculum thereby allowing me to pay close attention to the text itself (contained in both the policies and curriculum) with an understanding of how it is externalised, reconceptualised and internalised through its construction, content selection and pedagogies.

Understanding these background and foreground ideas through the coordinative and communicative discourses, i.e. “the different arenas for policy solutions, the programmatic ideas that underpin policy ideas and the level of ‘public philosophies’, or the values and principles that form the basic assumptions of societal norms” (Wahlström and Sundberg, 2018, p. 165), will enable me to explore further the LS[BE] values and cultural norms that inform the curriculum content selection, teaching and learning methodologies and assessment.

Table 1 below summarises the different levels (amidst the structures and agential points) that will be used to analyse the study in order to help understand the development and implementation of the LS[BE] curriculum through different discourses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Levels</th>
<th>Arenas</th>
<th>Background ideas</th>
<th>Foreground ideas</th>
<th>Main discourses</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MACRO</td>
<td>National policy</td>
<td>Public philosophy (normative ideas) and paradigms (cognitive ideas) for the maintenance of the institution</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Coordinative discourses in the forming of a ‘public philosophy’</td>
<td>Public, national politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal / Philosophical / Institutional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICRO/ENVIRONMENTAL</td>
<td>Enacting policy solutions in different local arenas</td>
<td>Historical and cultural traditions of education (normative ideas)</td>
<td>Frames (normative ideas) and formulated programmes (cognitive ideas) for changes to the institutions</td>
<td>Communicative ‘persuasive’ and ‘deliberative’ discourses between policy actors to anchor as well as challenge policies in Education</td>
<td>National policymakers, politicians, international and national education experts, national education authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic / Intended Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National / Classroom / Enacted Curriculum</td>
<td>Enacted curriculum</td>
<td>Social understanding of education (cognitive ideas)</td>
<td>Enacted curriculum (cognitive ideas)</td>
<td>Coordinative discourses forming a common understanding of the task for the school and its teachers</td>
<td>Teacher educators, school leaders, teachers, parents, students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Concepts informing study framework*

Source: Adapted from Schmidt (2008)
2.7.2 Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

As much as the three levels of macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and classroom will be useful in analysing the study, there is also a need for a more nuanced analytical tool to specifically analyse how the intended curriculum is put into practice, i.e., the cognitive processes and knowledge structures of the LS[B]E curriculum as well as how the curriculum is enacted at classroom level. Section 2.7.1 above refers to the deliberative communicative discourse, which is usually asymmetrical, authoritative, and top-down. This communication may not only happen at policy level but equally at classroom level between teachers and learners due to didactic pedagogies, as agency is also manifested differently at this level. In order to connect these different levels, Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001) (hereinafter referred to as Bloom’s taxonomy) is therefore an accompaniment framework that will be adopted. Bloom’s taxonomy aims to help education professionals answer the questions of “what is worth learning?”, “how will teaching and learning occur?”, and “what is to be examined?” (Anderson and Krathwohl, ibid, p. 236).

2.7.2.1 Relevance of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

Linking to the learning objectives set at development stage, Bloom’s taxonomy helps give focus to cognitive behaviours in a verb-based “cumulative, hierarchical system for describing, classifying, and sequencing learning activities” (Orlich et al., 2001, p. 97). These behaviours span the lowest categories of cognition from Remember (lowest), through to Understand, Apply, Analyse, Evaluate and Create (highest) which are then cross-linked with the four types of knowledge: factual; conceptual; procedural; and metacognitive (see Table 2 below).

Bloom’s taxonomy provides an “advantageous” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p. 301) concept because it identifies the location, substance, direction and strengths and weaknesses of teachers’ and students’ knowledge and cognitive processes. In addition, the framework also helps teachers to frame questions, plan activities and organise classroom activities in order to fulfil the cognitive and knowledge objectives they seek to achieve (Collier-Harris and Goldman, 2017). Below is a table summarising the revised taxonomy specifically in relation to LS[B]E objectives and outcomes:
Table 2: Analysis of the cognitive processing domain using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Level</th>
<th>Revised Taxonomy</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyse</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief description Level</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recall facts or bits of information</td>
<td>Construct meaning from the information remembered</td>
<td>Use the information in a given situation</td>
<td>Break material into smaller parts and see how the parts relate to each other and the bigger picture</td>
<td>Make judgements based on the information</td>
<td>Synthesize the information and put it together to apply it in a new way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of learning verbs</td>
<td></td>
<td>List, memorise, identify, cite, recall</td>
<td>Explain, describe, illustrate, clarify, restate, discuss</td>
<td>Apply, use, demonstrate, show, practice</td>
<td>Analyse, examine, compare, contrast, debate, appraise</td>
<td>Evaluate, judge, decide, appraise, recommend</td>
<td>Create, design, construct, present, compose, hypothesise, generate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of behavioural objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students will be able to list five facts about HIV transmission.</td>
<td>Students will be able to describe how condoms protect against HIV.</td>
<td>Students will be able to use refusal skills correctly when faced with pressure to have sex.</td>
<td>Students will be able to compare and contrast the pros and cons of having sex.</td>
<td>Students will be able to decide on the most effective form of protection (abstinence or contraception) in relationships.</td>
<td>Students will be able to compose a response to an anonymous caller seeking advice on what to do about some STI symptoms s/he is experiencing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge dimension</td>
<td></td>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Analyse</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Create</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Kirby, Laris and Rolleri., 2007; and Bertram, 2008
According to Krause, Stark and Mandl (2009), knowledge is where much curriculum development starts from, i.e., where objectives are planned as part of curriculum development. Factual knowledge is the lowest point where problem-solving starts; the conceptual knowledge network then helps with the functioning interrelationships of concepts. This in turn leads to the inquiry methods and skills criteria which are necessary for procedural knowledge to be effective; and finally, to the highest-level knowledge, i.e., the metacognitive level where self-cognition is at work (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). These cross-linked categories of knowledge and verbs can then be used by curriculum developers as well as teachers to align with specific objectives, activities (teaching and learning) and assessments. This then helps develop the appropriate content. Similar to this alignment Biggs (2003) also refers to constructive alignment at higher education level, i.e., curriculum and its intended outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks, the learners construct their own learning through relevant learning activities; and the teacher’s job then is to create an enabling learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Lastly, Bloom’s revised taxonomy is sometimes accused of prescribing appropriate pathways for learning with teachers still playing a leading role through the provision of the information before the learners can then be engaged in more complex tasks, e.g. learners are specifically asked to ‘describe’, ‘express’, ‘locate’, ‘explain’ or ‘summarise’ which assumes that they are expected to understand the material without being asked to ‘interpret’, ‘distinguish’, ‘relate’, or ‘question’ the subject content (Cause, 2013). Proponents argue that teachers should then be encouraged to move away from the assumption that only higher order outcomes can be achieved through higher order tasks and instead recognise that rigorous thinking is how people learn. Learners should therefore be allowed to digest the content being studied at that particular time.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided a literature review and a contextual background of SHE. Contextualising the study helped to provide an understanding of where SHE sits globally as well as nationally in Malawi, and also shows how policies guide the framing of HIV and AIDS education in general. In addition, a background to curriculum reforms that have taken place in Malawi was also covered which helped situate where the proposed
study curriculum fits.

This chapter also presented the concepts guiding this study and their relevancy, i.e., the analytical levels of macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and classroom; which are informed by concepts from CT, structure and agency. An accompaniment framework of Bloom’s taxonomy has also been adopted to help analyse classroom enactment. Using these analytical levels in understanding the LS[B]E curriculum development and implementation helps challenge the linear models and assumptions associated with curriculum change, i.e., causation between policy and practice where the construction of policy and implementation determines the outcome. This framework will therefore provide a more multi-faceted set of concepts to the recontextualisation of LS[B]E education and curriculum policies in different arenas (national, local and transnational), highlighting who the different actors are, and how their ideas (through specific language) are then legitimised through the communication (in this case, the finalised curriculum). Anderson-Levitt (2008) indicates such an analytical perspective helps to understand what drives curriculum change (in this case LS[B]E) in today’s globalised society where local, national and transnational forces and actors play a role in shaping and reshaping national education systems; and what convergences and/or divergences can be identified, in which among many, aspects such as learning objectives and outcomes, subject categories, time allocation and resources are central. The next chapter therefore discusses the methodology adopted for the study.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided a contextual overview of the background to SHE, related debates, and an overview of Malawi education systems specifically around HIV and AIDS education as well as of national policy guiding education. In addition, the concepts guiding the study were also discussed. This chapter explores the methodological trajectory adopted in order to address the specific questions guiding my research:

RQ1: What are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning and assessment?

RQ2: How do teachers implement, and students experience, the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?

The chapter is organised into five sections. Firstly, I discuss the ontological and epistemological premises of the study. Secondly, the chapter explores the methodological trajectory adopted in order to address the specific questions and articulates the research design used, the data collection methods undertaken, and the analysis methods used, as well as the ethical procedures that were adhered to. In addition, my positionality as a researcher is also examined bearing in mind the normative beliefs regarding sexual communication, which continue to impact on the delivery of sex and sexuality education, as reported by Limaye et al. (2012) from a study they conducted on how sex is talked about in Malawi.

In order to ensure triangulation and data validity, I follow what Yin (2009, p. 122) refers to as a “chain of evidence”. Yin further likens the principle of “maintaining a chain of evidence” to the notion employed in a forensic investigation, noting that the methodological process should be tight enough that evidence presented ‘in court’ – my study report – is assuredly the same evidence that was collected ‘at the scene’ during the data collection process.
3.2 Research approach

3.2.1 Linking philosophy to research: my epistemological and ontological assumptions

Philosophically I link my study to some epistemological and ontological assumptions. The assumptions also position my understanding of social research in general as well as the development of my research methodology and methods which have been adopted for this study. These epistemological and ontological assumptions have also arisen from my early reflective thoughts on HIV education development, implementation and assessment, whose terminologies I did not have when I started the study. However, my understanding and knowledge in this area have been broadened with wider reading thereby enabling me to understand and relate to the philosophical arguments and reflect on them critically in relation to my area of study.

Jupp (2006) define ontology as “a concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures... within society” (n.p.n). Bryman (2008) further introduces the concept of ‘social ontology’ and defines it as a philosophical consideration in research which is concerned with the nature of social entities, i.e., examining whether these social entities are, or can be objective entities which exist independently from social actors or whether they are social constructions in themselves built up from the perceptions, actions and interpretations of the individuals in society. Ontologically, my study is interested in understanding “social phenomena and their meanings” which are often understood as “continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2001, p. 18) thereby positioning itself within social constructionist assumptions.

The SAGE Online Dictionary of Social Research Methods (2006) further defines epistemology as “a field of philosophy concerned with the possibility, nature, sources and limits of human knowledge” (n.p.n). An epistemological approach gives me the opportunity to view the social world in a way that entails rejecting that ‘there is only one way in which to describe it’ thereby allowing me as the researcher and the participants to be viewed as “both producers of accounts” and “their social location in the world influences how they come to experience and describe it” (Temple and Edwards, 2002, p. 2). Interpretivism and constructionism (Bryman, 2012) offer ways of knowing about the world thereby allowing us to interpret the world around us from our
own reflections of events (Ormston et al., 2014).

Interpretivist and constructionist approaches argue that knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding (rather than discovering) the social world of the people being studied. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 19), “the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated”. Since reality is seen through people’s beliefs and perceptions, there are different ways of viewing and interpreting HIV education development, implementation and assessment processes. Thus, it makes knowledge subjective since it is influenced by various contextual and personal factors which are socially ‘constructed’ and therefore do not exist independently of human interactions and experiences. Cohen et al. (2011a, p. 19) further state that “social science is seen as a subjective rather than objective undertaking, as a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts, and when social scientists understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants”. It is for this reason that I do not consider HIV education development as a purely objective phenomenon which exists independently of the education system or its context but rather as a result of an active process of interaction and deliberate exchange of meanings between different actors. The respondents’ own interpretations of HIV education are of critical importance in helping to explore their varied viewpoints which will yield different types of understandings.

My research process is also to a large extent inductive as its aim is to generate a theory from the data collected rather than to use the data to test an already existing theory. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2014, p. xv) describe this approach:

“Philosophical presuppositions do not necessarily lead directly to methodological ones or precede them in the timeline of a researcher’s analytical or theoretical development. In fact, many social scientists working with interpretive methodologies came to their philosophical presuppositions, or to know and understand them, only after extended involvement in empirical research. It has often been their very grounded, empirically based dissatisfaction with the explanatory power of “traditional” quantitative methods for their research questions, rather than a more general philosophically grounded inquiry, that has led researchers to explore and engage interpretive epistemologies and interpretive-inflected methods.”

By taking an interpretivist view which emphasises a close relationship between myself (as a researcher) and the social world, I therefore show that the two are not totally
independent of each other but rather impact on one another. Rather than distance and
detach myself from the research itself, I am acknowledging that I will construct meanings
and interpretations of our experiences and reflections together with the participants. As
this study is about understanding the development, implementation and assessment of
HIV education which is associated with complex human behaviour and social
phenomena, it therefore lends itself mainly (though not exclusively) to qualitative
research. These ontological and epistemological positions are therefore of particular
relevance to my study as I explore the different perceptions of actors in this context
through the eyes of policy makers, government officials working in education and health
sectors, teachers, and students themselves. Such a social constructionist approach will
therefore facilitate challenging the notion that such social research must “fulfil the
explanatory and predictive task” of natural sciences (Delanty and Strydom, 2003, p. 19).

3.3 The research study

This study sought to find out ‘What ideas and discourses inform Malawi’s HIV and AIDS
education policy and how is the developed curriculum implemented at classroom
level?’. In order to be able to respond to the focus of the study, an interpretive
qualitative study approach was adopted which enabled me to understand the different
SRH decision making processes. While the study was looking at a single curriculum
development process, different actors were involved, including teachers at school level,
who each brought an understanding of the different development and implementation
processes of the curriculum.

3.3.1 State and non-state participants

Importantly, gaining access through the MoEST was key in identifying a school where
first-hand implementation of the developed curriculum could be observed, hence the
inclusion of the selected school. Due to the time available for conducting the research,
I adopted a snowballing and purposive sampling approach (Cohen, Manion and
Morrison, 2011) which enabled me to progress more quickly. As I was specifically
interested in curriculum development and implementation processes, it was important
to identify specific individuals in the ministerial departments as informants who would
then help me identify the cases. In addition, rather than observe the entire school (i.e.
four classes), I chose to concentrate on junior secondary school only (i.e. two classes)
due to what was feasible in the time available. In addition, in these early years, it is visibly easy to see how much knowledge the student has gradually gained over the two years in comparison to their senior peers who would have been at an advanced stage.

While the state and non-state actors did not have much choice, as they were selected based on their official roles which included their involvement in developing the curriculum, the school was individually selected by the DIAS due to negotiations I had made in my initial research design stages. Nevertheless, the selection of the state and non-state actors (as per the planning matrix below) fitted with my study design as per my conceptual framing, which explored the complex and non-linear approaches that take place during policy transfer. In addition, my literature review above shows how resource-constrained schools struggle to ensure quality education and resources. As outlined in Chapter 1 above, the selected school study site was set in an under-privileged rural area where mostly under-trained teachers (due to the fast-tracked teacher preparation with very little or no specific LS[B]E preparation) are deployed to. In order to explore how the implementation occurred, such a site therefore provided an ideal study site.
### Table 3: Planning matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Phase 1 (4 months)</th>
<th>Phase 2 (6 months)</th>
<th>Phase 3 (9 months)</th>
<th>Phase 4 (12 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phases</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview School management policy documents</td>
<td>Interview Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview Teacher Guide- and Student Hand-book, lesson plan</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Head Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview Teacher Guide- and Student Hand-book, lesson plan</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 1 Teacher (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview Teacher Guide- and Student Hand-book, lesson plan</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2 Teachers (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview Teacher Guide- and Student Hand-book, lesson plan</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Teachers (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview, Report of incidents</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Classroom Observations FGDs Interviews</td>
<td>Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Makers from NGOs and government ministerial Departments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview HIV/AIDS Policies</td>
<td>Interviews, Teaching and Learning Materials, Policy, Education Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Developers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Policy, Needs Assessment Report</td>
<td>Interviews Documents</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Interviews Documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author

#### 3.3.2 The secondary school context

According to the MDHS 2015, Malawi’s wealthiest households are concentrated in urban areas where 98% have access to improved source of drinking water, compared with only 85% of rural households; and only 4% of rural households have access to electricity compared to 49% in urban areas. According to GoM (2017) urban households are more likely than rural households to own a radio (65% versus 36%), television (45% versus 6%), or mobile telephone (86% versus 48%). In contrast, rural households are
more likely than urban households to own agricultural land (83% versus 37%) or farm animals (53% versus 23%). The study school site is based in Mchenga, a rural part of Lilongwe city. It was highlighted that the school area is affected by a lack of resources like running water or sanitary facilities, which sometimes makes it harder for some students to attend lessons. A very small percentage (3%) of the students owned a mobile phone and/or television in their household. Most of the people living in the Mchenga area are small-holder farmers, growing just enough for their own families. Mchenga’s population is 49,000 (forming part of Lilongwe city’s total population of 1,637,000) (GoM, 2019). Poverty makes progress difficult and frequently the crops barely provide enough food for people in the community.

A socio-economic check of the students’ backgrounds particularly looked for basic needs like running water and/or electricity, as these would have an effect on how much time the students could spend studying after school, once they were not engaged in any housework. Table 4 below shows how many of the students involved in the study have electricity and water, and Table 5 those with white goods in their homes.

**Table 4: Electricity and water access**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electricity: n = 120</th>
<th>Running water: n = 120</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes = 69 (57%)</td>
<td>Yes = 100 (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No = 51 (43%)</td>
<td>No = 20 (17%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: White goods (fridge, television, radio, etc.) in the students’ homes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor (less than 3 items)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good (between 3 and 6 items)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good (between 7 and 8 items)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the MDHS of 2015-16, 1 in 4 women (26%) and 36% of men are estimated to have at least some secondary education; with 72% of women and 83% of men being literate in Malawi. Women and men living in urban areas are more likely to be literate than those living in rural areas. 90% of urban women and 96% of urban men are literate compared to 68% of rural women and 80 of rural men (NSO, 2017), though the numbers for Mchenga remains low. Schools are expensive and the families are often unable to pay the fees required to send their children to school. As a result, there are few schools in the area. Until 2001, secondary school students at Mchenga only attended classes for
three hours as there was no infrastructure at the time and they had to use the primary school, only available after the primary school day was over.

Despite the low levels of literacy in some parts of the country, 42% of women and 48% of men have comprehensive knowledge about the modes of HIV transmission and prevention (NSO, 2017). The same report states that “41% of young women and 44% of young men have comprehensive knowledge of HIV, which includes knowing that consistent use of condoms during sexual intercourse and having just one uninfected faithful partner can reduce the chance of getting HIV, knowing that a healthy-looking person can have HIV, and rejecting the two most common local misconceptions about HIV transmission” (Ibid, p. 209).

It has been reported by MHRC (2014) that there are approximately 15 ethnic groups in Malawi with the major ones being: Tumbuka and the Tonga in the northern region; the Ngoni in the northern and central regions; the Chewa in the central region; and the Yao, the Lomwe, the Sena and the Mang’anja in the southern region. While some cultural practices are diffusing among the ethnic groups and some differences are diminishing as a result of intermarriages and migration, some cultural differences among the ethnic groups remain significant. Mchenga area is a predominantly rural ‘Chewa’ area, who are matrilineal. The Chewa are a Bantu people of central and southern Africa and are the largest ethnic group in Malawi. Internationally, the Chewa are mainly known for their masks and their secret societies, called ‘Kumeta Nyau/Kulowa Gule’ where boys undergo this rite of passage between the ages of 10 and 15 years. Through this tradition the boys are taken to dambwe (sacred place)/mzinda or kumanda (normally it is a graveyard) where they are guided and taught by a phungu (guide) on how to conduct themselves in society, learning such skills as building a house, making hoe-handles and mat-weaving, so that when they get married, they should not face difficulties in providing for their families. Each boy is allocated a guide and once there they remove their shirts and are then blindfolded while being beaten (which only stops once the boy is accepted as a full member of the cult) by the nyau. It is the phungu’s responsibility to protect the boys.

Despite the HIV and AIDS incidences in Malawi, there are certain cultural norms that continue to be a barrier to HIV prevention, though Page (2019) stresses that there is
little empirical evidence to demonstrate how the practices contribute to the epidemic, e.g. initiation ceremonies and rituals which lead to unprotected sex, increasing young people’s vulnerability to HIV, especially among young girls (Jimmy-Gama, 2009); and societal norms where men are allowed to have multiple concurrent sexual relationships (Page, 2019). For instance, child marriage in Malawi continues to be a serious problem, with about 46% of girls marrying before they reach the age of 18, and a further 9% before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2018).

In 2012 the UN highlighted the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS which recognised “the harmful effects of unequal gender norms and practices and pledged concerted action to eliminate gender inequalities” (UN, 2012, p. 19). In addition, the 2011 UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS member states agreed to “pledge to eliminate gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence, increase the capacity of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection” (UN 2011, p. 8); though without naming any specific harmful cultural practices.

3.3.2.1 Mchenga Community Day Secondary School
As explained in Chapter Two, the chosen co-education school is a CDSS off the main road and close to 20 kms away from the main capital, Lilongwe. The school faces classroom disruptions caused by some of the cultural practices within the area, like initiation ceremonies. The school is embedded within the rural area though it is linked to a main road. As it is a community school, most of the activities are meant to be funded by the community through various fundraising activities. The school has 12 teachers with a six-member parent teacher association (PTA) governing body. There are four grades with only four classes, with an average of 60 learners per class in the junior secondary classes and about 45 learners in each of the senior secondary classes signifying that students drop off or get transferred to other schools. Due to the limitations of the teaching space, students stay in their classroom and teachers therefore move from classroom to classroom. The school generally caters for students who have not made it into the conventional (day and boarding) secondary schools and students are expected to pay a termly fee of MK5,000\(^{11}\). While the majority of the students come from the surrounding areas, some come as far as seven kilometers away and sometimes on an empty stomach.

\(^{11}\) Equivalent to GB£5.47 – 1GBP = MWK913.57.
Classroom interactions have been known to produce mixed results on how different sexes interact, be it between teachers or between teachers and learners. Raey (2004) equally argues on using habitus to include race and gender differences in relation to smaller research contexts such as classrooms:

“Habitus is a way of looking at data which renders the ‘taken-for-granted’ problematic. It suggests a whole range of questions not necessarily addressed in empirical research. How well adapted is the individual to the context they find themselves in? How does personal history shape their responses to the contemporary setting? What subjective provocations do they bring to the present and how are they manifested? Are structural effects visible within small scale interactions? What is the meaning of non-verbal behaviour as well as individual’s use of language? These questions clearly raise issues of gender and ‘race’ alongside those of social class.” (Raey, 1995, p. 369)

In order to provide an overview of the distribution of the different sexes for teachers and students two separate tables are presented below; one on teacher numbers; and one on student numbers:

**Table 6: Teacher numbers by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%age of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7: School enrolment by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Class Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% by Gender</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data here shows that there are more female teachers in comparison to the male teachers; while there are more boys in the whole school in comparison with girls; with the average age of students in Form 1 being 14 years, and 16 years for Form 2. Such gender dynamics are not unusual as men tend to take on more administrative jobs whereas women tend to go for the teaching profession, where they may also assume gender roles, e.g., that of a mother. In a study conducted on same gender effects on
student outcome in SSA, it was reported by Lee, Rhee and Rudolf (2017) that generally gender gaps do remain in the teaching profession and that same gender effects play an important role in understanding these gender gaps in education.

The school infrastructure comprised four block buildings with three mainly housing the individual classrooms, i.e., each block had two classrooms. One of the blocks contained a classroom and a library, while the staff room, and the headteacher’s and deputy headteacher’s offices, were located in another block. The classrooms only had corrugated sheets without any ceiling boards and during the rainy season, there would be disruptive noise from the rain as well as a few leakages. Additionally, in the hot season, the classrooms would become uncomfortably hot. All 12 teachers shared an open plan staff room, and each teacher had their own (mainly hand-made) desk. The school did not have a laboratory (which meant no experimental subjects such as Physical Science or Biology were practised) and all school notices including the school timetable (mostly hand-written), were pinned to the wall of the staff room.

The library was used as a computer space (with only one desktop computer) in addition to being used for storing all of the students’ hand-books. As such, students were not necessarily allowed to use it and were only allowed to enter in the library when they were cleaning up or had been asked to collect specific hand-books for lesson purposes. Amongst the teachers, only two were familiar with using a computer whereas the others had not undergone any particular computer training. As a result, the timetable, as well as any notices that needed typing up, were the responsibility of those two teachers which was an additional task on their already limited day time.

In addition to the classrooms, there was a playground which was used for school assembly (every morning), and physical education (PE) as well as for football games. The school only had one pit latrine toilet which was shared by both teachers and students (though it was not observed directly that students accessed it). Below I present a sample of daily average attendance:

*Table 8: Sample daily absentees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Total enrolled</th>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>% of absentees over attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study was specifically targeting LS[B]E teachers and students in Forms 1 and 2. The classes were chosen on the basis that at the end of Form exams, the school drop-out rate was most likely to increase and as the curriculum is linear, it was also a good way to follow up on how students were perceiving the knowledge acquired throughout the two years of junior secondary school. This in a way, also helped with determining if there had been any changes in the knowledge acquired from one year group to the next. Each of the classes comprised 69 and 57 students in Forms 1 and 2 respectively.

3.4 Data collection methods

3.4.1 Sample description

In order for me to gain access to the field study sites, I had to make prior contact with the main gatekeepers, which at times required me to be in constant communication with the various respondents via telephone, email and physical visits. While interviews can be conducted with as many people as necessary, as Kvale (1996) points out, my overall sample was determined by the nature of my study. The sample included a wide range of participants including government institutions, UN organisations, CBOs, donor institutions, research and academic institutions, and programme-implementing agencies. It should be noted that some organisations span various sectors. As such, interviewees were drawn from these institutions mainly based on their participation in the development and/or implementation of the LSE curriculum itself.

Two specific classrooms were purposively selected as part of the study, i.e., Forms 1 (comprising 69 students: 24 girls and 45 boys) and Form 2 (comprising 57 students: 21 girls and 36 boys). Only two male teachers (there was a third female teacher who declined to participate) were involved in the study, on the basis that they were directly responsible for LS[B]E teaching. Cooper and Schindler (2001) indicate that it is not unusual for people to refuse to be interviewed without giving any reason. Hence, I focused on the two teachers who had voluntarily agreed to be included in the study. Additionally, the headteacher and deputy headteacher (who had authority powers as well as picking up on some of the lessons when teachers were absent), and two welfare
teachers (who would have been in a position to help students on general and health matters) were also involved, bringing the total number of teachers to six, i.e., two female and 4 male). In order to remove bias in student selection, I introduced my study to all 126 students and asked those that wanted to take part in it to approach me after school. While the introduction may have removed some of the bias which the school would have brought, through their own selection of students they would have deemed to be appropriate for my study, I was aware that the time limitation also meant that those students who had to leave immediately after classes, were automatically excluded from the study. Selection bias is not a problem in education research so long as the defined target population from which a sample is drawn comprises all students in that specific group for those specific classes, in this case the students in Forms 1 and 2. As a result of this bias, I applied what Fritz and Lim (2018) refer to as the random assignment system where all students who had volunteered and indicated they were available (and those interested but not available during the set time) were included in the study, i.e. those that were not available after school were interviewed during break time or first thing in the morning before classes began. In addition, students participated voluntarily without being pushed and/or intimidated by authoritarian teachers.

While data was collected retrospectively in relation to the LSE curriculum development process itself, the participants that were included were perceived (by interviewees and me) as having played a pivotal role in developing LSE in Malawi. For instance, while I had not perceived GIZ as a key player, interviewees felt, as an organisation, it played a key role in HIV and AIDS education. Of course, such interviewees also highlighted their understanding of decision-making processes when it came to the development of the said curriculum. As Table 9 below summarises, a total of 63 interviews (without counting repeated ones), 60 classroom observations, 40 (20 girls and 20 boys) student individual interviews and three FGDs (with 10 students/group) were conducted during the study:
Table 9: Sample summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of institute / organisation</th>
<th>Type of organisation / institute</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
<th>Data collection method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MoEST</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>5 (4 male and 1 female)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoH</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoGender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>UN organisation</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>UN organisation</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>UN organisation</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>UN organisation</td>
<td>1 (female)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Bi-lateral</td>
<td>1 (female)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YONECO</td>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>1 (female)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Social Research</td>
<td>Research and academic institution</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mchenga Secondary School</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6 (teachers) (3 male and 3 female)</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

70* students (overall – see next column for specific breakdown) Interviews (40) FGDs (30) 60 classroom observations

| NAC                             | Parastatal                      | 2                           |                       |
| Total                           | 12 organisations                | 93                          |                       |

Source: Author

* Number does not include the 60 classroom observations

Specific data collection methods

The research adopted an interpretive qualitative study approach. As noted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) qualitative research typically combines different data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires, archives and observations. Consequently, the study used document review, semi-structured individual interviews, classroom observations and FGDs; all of which helped gain respondents’ perspectives and understandings of HIV and AIDS education policy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Atkinson et al., 2007).

Data for the study was collected over four different phases (see Table 3 above) using three different methods and tools for the different participants. As such, it was important to phase out the visits in a logical sequence in order to allow the understanding of certain processes in the policy system as well as at school level before proceeding to the next level. This was also to allow for any adaptations needed to follow-up data phases. The data collection and analysis formed an ongoing iterative
process with policy changes taking place along the way, some of which were as a result of the study findings. It should be noted that there is a period missing from the phases, i.e., May 2018 to April 2019, which was due to my being on intermission for financial reasons. As noted, some of the phases were interlinked. The detailed phases (which include preparation) are outlined in Appendix 14. Below I discuss the specific data collection methods employed in the study.

3.4.2 Documentary Review

In order to validate and corroborate data as well as to build theory, the review of documents was key to the study. As supported by Bailey (1994), the analysis of documents provides an opportunity to explore the phenomenon we wish to study. Written documents communicate political, social, organisational and cultural identities and values. Discourses, whether dominant or not, manifest themselves in assorted representations be it documents or media, etc. Discourses as they do, show the sets of rules for ordering and relating discursive elements in such a way that some meanings rather than others are constituted. As pointed out by Weldes (2006) discourses are therefore sources of power because ruling some meanings in and others out is already and fundamentally an exercise of power. Any alternative discourses that are contrary to the main ones are therefore perceived as a form of resistance towards power, thereby bringing in contestations.

Throughout the study, I also paid close attention to what was being portrayed in the media though there was minimal (if any) coverage of specific HIV issues and HIV education other than what was being communicated through the national radio through plays, jingles and music in different dialects, as well as through theatre performances aided by non-state funding. In 2016 global media attention was drawn to a highly contested issue on intergenerational sex which was being practised as part of initiation ceremonies. The incident raised concerns over HIV and AIDS education and such cultural practices in a highly infected population such as Malawi (see Appendix 11 for full story). This study conducted a comprehensive review of several government policies and reports and non-governmental reports including the UN and specific SRH, CBO and NGO reports. In addition, the following documents were reviewed: the Malawi HIV and AIDS Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector (2014-2018); the LSE Teacher Guidebook for Forms 1 and 2; and the LSE Student Handbook for Forms 1 and 2; along

While document reviews are advantageous in that they are efficient, readily available, static, cost-effective, and unobtrusive, they have limitations. One of the challenges I faced was low government document retrievability due to what Yin (1994) refers to as intentional blockages for biased selectivity. For instance, I had limited access to a select (and not all) number of documents relevant to the LSE curriculum development process, e.g., the mandate (ToR) of the working group for curriculum development was available whereas minutes of the several meetings (where contestations would have been recorded) were not available. While national policies are publicly available, their inaccessibility emphasised the “oppression, discrimination and exclusion” that Guy (1999, p. 11) refers to around the dominant culture reproduced in those documents. Evidence from Adzahlie-Mensah (2012, p. 92) confirms this as he states that “the privileged culture in those documents interpenetrates the multiple sites of power and implicates the degree of power a different person can appropriate, merging the micro-social context of the learner with the macro-social and cultural dimensions that influence learning and teaching”.

Documents are not specifically written for research as they are written for a specific purpose as well as audience (Grix, 2001). The documents used in this study were secondary, i.e., those produced by people who were not present at the scene but who “received eye-witness accounts to compile the documents” (Bailey, 1994, p. 194). As I needed to make sense of the background of the phenomenon being studied, i.e., what influenced the development of SE in the first place, the documents provided my starting point in order to understand what happened in the past and how that shaped the future, i.e., how SE for HIV prevention became what it is and how it has changed how education is perceived over time. My use of document review therefore provided me with an entry point from which I was able to explore the specific HIV and AIDS education policy commitments, thereby enabling me to interrogate what the commitments really meant – whose interests were prioritised and why, and how this was being interpreted into the LS[B]E curriculum for implementation. Thus, by looking at both public and private documents, I was able to also explore further how power was embedded within the
institutional structures of the space under study (Wright, 2003).

Whilst documentary sources may not be very popular in mainstream social research, it is not new as social theorists like Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx have made extensive use of such sources (Mogalakwe, 2006). Using Scott’s (1990) quality control criteria for handling the data sources helped me formulate a scientific way of using these sources systematically, in order to ensure authenticity\textsuperscript{12}, credibility\textsuperscript{13}, representativeness\textsuperscript{14} and meaning\textsuperscript{15}. In all probability, the policy documents would have been written by civil servants whilst an annual report would have been written by the CEO with the help of their staff, some of whom would have changed their positions. Rather than take the documents as irrelevant, I took them on an understanding that they were reflective of Malawi’s national policies around LS[B]E.

All documents used had been prepared beforehand and independently and therefore I had no influence on the content in relation to my research. A rigorous reading of these documents revealed how the wording of the government documents, i.e., “their language, was a form of discourse that subtly ordered people’s perceptions of the social structure and could be used to construct specific forms of social relationships and maintain the status quo” (Mogalakwe, 2006, p. 228). My findings may illuminate similar situations and provide some researchers with a starting point from which to embark on their investigations, whereas others may want to compare the findings in a similar field considering the limitations of the research in scope and transferability.

3.4.3 Individual Interviews

State and non-state actors

It is asserted by Tuckman (1972) that information gathered through interviews has a direct bearing on research objectives as he states: “By providing access to what is ‘inside a person’s head’, [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)” (in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 411). By using semi-structured interviews, I was able to use prompts and probes for further

\textsuperscript{12} Whether evidence is genuine and from impeccable sources.
\textsuperscript{13} Whether the evidence is typical of its kind.
\textsuperscript{14} Whether the documents consulted are representative of the relevant documents and fields.
\textsuperscript{15} Whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible.
clarification, elaboration and extension. These helped me to cover the salient issues while also allowing me flexibility (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). Since the study required the collection of data from multiple sites, I had to divide the different participants accordingly in the different phases.

At ministerial level in the several state departments, a total of seven participants were interviewed (for an hour each) using a guide (see Appendix 4). Individual interviews with policymakers offered an opportunity for participants to reflect on their roles and experiences in policymaking processes, as well as how they interacted with others, thereby providing an overview of the decision-making process (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). These interviews helped me understand the forces of power and control being exerted by the state through policies and frameworks, as well as the curriculum development process in relation to HIV and AIDS. An additional eight participants from the non-state sector who were involved in curriculum development were also interviewed to help me understand how national HIV and AIDS frameworks, in their view, guide and underpin the shaping of HIV and AIDS prevention interventions, including education. These interviews provided me with a holistic picture which I could then relate back to the secondary data from the literature review. All individual interviews lasted an hour each. As the names of the research respondents have been anonymised (see below) for the purpose of this thesis, they are not provided as an appendix.

Similar to what other researchers (Hertz and Imber, 1995; Walford, 1994; Dexter, 1970; Aberbach and Rockman, 2002) have observed, conducting interviews with elites is often associated with challenges ranging from: difficulties in accessing such individuals; the researcher’s lack of control of interview agenda; and the interviewees’ tight schedules. While I was pointed to the right people in the ministerial departments, tracking them down was problematic due to staff changes as well as retirement. While I managed to access the right people, sitting down with the Director of DIAS, for instance, was impossible. I was asked to attend other departmental meetings that they were attending so I could have the interview with them. As with public events, gaining such a space was impossible. Two of the elite participants were opposed to me recording the interview and this meant I had to rely on my memory and write down what I could remember immediately after the interviews.
A different 45-minute interview guide (see Appendix 5) was used for four (of the total six) teachers who were interviewed at the case study school. The teacher respondents comprised: the headteacher and deputy headteacher (as authority figures who make decisions at the school as well as due to their PTA involvement); two teachers who teach LSE in both years; and two welfare teachers (see Appendix 6 for their 30-minute guide for LSE teachers). The individual interviews were conducted at three different points, i.e., at the beginning of the research, at the mid-point, and at the end of the data collection. The headteacher was interviewed to provide further data on decision making, teacher training, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher supervision and discipline, and parental involvement. The welfare teachers (male and female) were interviewed in order to check if there were any issues students raised in relation to SRH (specifically around HIV and AIDS). The teachers’ experiences therefore helped provide their understanding and experience of the LS[B]E curriculum. While the data was collected over three different periods, it is presented as one account and where changes occurred in terms of the pedagogic practice this is clearly outlined.

These interviews helped me to gauge their understanding around teaching LS[B]E (including any problems they had) as well as to find out what specific SRH matters (in relation to HIV and AIDS) arose from the students. Though the headteacher and deputy headteacher may not necessarily be directly involved in the LS[B]E teaching (other than from when a teacher was absent), it was still important to gauge from them what their SRHE understandings were, in relation to its enactment, and also how parents felt generally about LS[B]E being taught to their children. Involving the headteacher and deputy headteacher also provided an opportunity to understand if there were any issues in relation to teacher preparation and development around SE which could also be cross-referenced with what the teachers directly involved with classes would say to me. The pseudonyms Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa have been used for the teachers observed (see Chapter Five).

Students
Docherty and Sandelowski (1999, p. 177) agree that children are the “best sources of information about themselves” while Eder and Fingerson (2003) agree that sensitive matters (e.g., sexuality) yield best results from adolescents through individual interviews, though accessing them can be challenging (Testa and Coleman, 2006). As such, semi-structured interviews for students were conducted for 40 students in total.
(using an open-ended 35-minute interview guide – see Appendix 7). Specifically, students were interviewed in order to learn about their personal experiences. Phoenix, Frosh and Pattman (2003) note that individual interviews with students provide them with the opportunities to talk about experiences which they may not necessarily feel comfortable talking about in a group setting. As will be noted in Section 4.4.5 below, some students were uncomfortable in the FGDs and therefore did not participate actively. In addition, some of the students (particularly girls) did not want to associate themselves with what they described as ‘uhule’ (promiscuity) while some of the boys were particularly keen to appear as ‘boys’ by showing that they have had sexual encounters before (see Chapter Five below). The interviews with the students focused mainly on: their lives at home; their SRH and relationships knowledge (both from home and school); the teaching and learning of STIs including HIV; their interaction with peers and teachers in the classroom especially around sensitive areas; perceptions of sexually active peers, and those affected by HIV; and what an ideal LS[B]E curriculum should entail.

A digital recorder and notes of observations were used during this phase. Student interviews could only be conducted during break times to avoid any disruptions. As such only two students could be interviewed each day amidst a very full timetable as their normal day started at 7.30am and ended at 1pm. In some instances, it was not even possible to hold the interviews if, for instance, there were school meetings taking place and I could not use any of the school facilities to have a secure private space. In addition, during the first phase of the data collection, the period coincided with the Malawi presidential elections which meant that classes were disrupted in some instances by politicians who would turn up unannounced at the school for their campaigns. As it is a deprived area, these politicians would, in a way, promise through their manifestos a possible way out of poverty through, for instance, the construction of new classrooms or the provision of teaching and learning materials, etc. As much as it was seen as disruptive, it was also seen as positive for the school to have good relations with such politicians if they could help with sustaining some of the school activities.

3.4.4 Classroom Observations

Qualitative studies are seen to be eclectic (due to the multiple research methods embedded within them) as well as “hybrid” (Verschuren, 2003, p. 125 125). As such,
they allow the researcher to make informed inferences and therefore “to read between the lines” (Yin, 2009, p. 70) thereby allowing adaptations along the way. During phases two and four of the study, I conducted semi-structured classroom observations as guided by Appendix 8. The main topic areas observed were on lesson preparation including the introduction and conclusion of lessons; inquiry methods including on assessment; teacher and students’ use of classroom space, and their use of the teacher guide-book and student hand-book; teacher-student and student-student interaction; and teacher classroom management.

As Willis (1977) describes in his intensive study of working-class boys in school, I became a participant observer despite clearly indicating my non-participant status. By becoming a participant observer, I was “able to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurred and was able to make appropriate notes about its salient features” and was therefore able to “develop more intimate and informal relationships with participants” (Bailey, 1994, p. 243-4) thereby allowing trust to build. While the study’s focus was mainly on HIV and AIDS specific topics, more general topics were observed in Forms 1 and 2 due to the integrated nature of the topic and, as such, 30 individual lessons in each class were observed in 2014 and 2015, making the total 60 observations. Following Lofland and Lofland’s (1984) guidance on observations, I took down notes during observations (in addition to video recording), which I then revisited and wrote up in detail alongside the recordings, to ensure that I captured any new areas that needed following up in the next lesson. While it has been suggested that dictating what is being observed is the best way of capturing, it was impossible for me to use this method due to the fact that the observations were taking place during lessons. As a trained note-taker, I was able to take down detailed notes within a short period of time.

Below is a summary of all topics for the Form and Form 2 LSE curricula with Form 1 having 22 units and only 10 units for Form 2.
Table 10: Units of LSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Values Clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Values clarification</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Practising good health habits</td>
<td>Decision making and Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>STIs including HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>Stress and Anxiety Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sex and Sexuality</td>
<td>Peaceful Conflict Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teenage Pregnancy</td>
<td>Practising Good Health Habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Effective Communication</td>
<td>Planning and Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>Human Rights and Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Decision Making and Problem Solving</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Peaceful Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stress and Anxiety Management</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Living Positively with HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Anti-retroviral Therapy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Home-based Care</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Human Rights and HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Gender, HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Guidance and Counselling</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Planning and Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>TALULAR in Life Skills and SRH Education</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

As can be observed in the table above, HIV and AIDS only appear in a few of the topics even though they are also discussed in other topics that do not necessarily address HIV and AIDS directly. The inclusion of topics other than HIV and AIDS was therefore crucial in observing how teachers and students were integrating HIV and AIDS into other learning areas. However, the HIV and AIDS specific topics are indicated in Table 11 below. Below is a table summarising the topics that were continuously observed to be related to HIV and AIDS.
### Table 11: LS(B)E Lesson observation summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson #</th>
<th>Topic of Unit</th>
<th>Length of Observation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minutes per lesson</td>
<td>Total minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 5, 7, 16</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 3, 4, 8, 6, 14</td>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 15</td>
<td>STIs including HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15</td>
<td>Practising Good Health Habits</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 7, 9, 13, 19</td>
<td>Decision making and Problem-solving</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The initial lesson observations may have been biased due to the teachers’ awareness of my interest in HIV-specific topics. I perceived initially teachers were ensuring that they were signalling HIV and AIDS in most of the units covered. However, over a longer period of time, both teachers and students saw me as an ‘insider’ which helped normalise my presence. As there was consistency in the teaching and learning structure of all lessons observed, the next section presents a detailed analysis of one lesson in each class in order to test the concepts that were being used to guide the study.

#### 3.4.5 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs rely on the interaction within the group; in other words, participants interact with each other rather than relying on the interviewer (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). 20 male students and 20 female students were selected to participate in FGDs (which followed a one-hour guide – Appendix 10) though only 30 actually turned up for them. Morgan (1988, p. 43) suggests “between four and 12 people per group”, whereas Fowler (2009, p. 117) suggests “between six and eight people”. Initially students had been put in heterogenous groups but as the second FGD was going on, it was discovered that having homogenous groups might yield more results. Initially three FGDs of 10 students each (with five girls and five boys) took place and during this phase it was noted that the
girls were not participating that much. Rather than assume that they did not know about the topics being discussed, the students were split into four groups, i.e., two for girls and two for boys only. While it was challenging to separate friends on the basis that they were in the same classes, I mixed the groups up and ensured that they were with relative strangers. It was during these homogenous focus groups that students became more open. Each group therefore consisted of either seven or eight students. The FGDs were now structured in a way that facilitated understanding of the students’ comprehension of key or problematic questions around SRH.

The students were given a set of topics to choose from, all related to SHE, and even though there was variety in the topics they preferred to discuss, there were also a lot of similarities. The topics chosen included: the importance of religion in sexual behaviour; additional sources of information including family; the importance of SRH education; understanding of who one can have a sexual relationship with; gender understanding and/or disparity of men and women including equality of boys and girls; how to state one’s opinion even when everybody disagrees; the importance of money and its links to happiness (or not); and abortion. The FGDs took place in a conducive space within the school environment, and with the help of a Research Assistant (see Section 4.7.2 below) who helped moderate as well as take notes and observe group dynamics, I was able to guide the students and ensure none of the participants dominated the discussions (Newby, 2010). An example of an FGD recording including seating plan is attached as Appendix 10.

Although the specifics of sampling data collection are described above, additional key points need to be noted. It is worth noting that while the data was being collected, the GoM gradually introduced a new syllabus in 2015. As the study had already started collecting data on the old curriculum, the data being referred to in this thesis is therefore only based on that and not the new curriculum; this would not have been accurate since only one year of the study group would have been able to participate.

3.5 Data Management and Analysis

3.5.1 Grounded theory

This study adopted a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). According to Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 273), “grounded theory is a general methodology for
developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed”. Through the study, I will discover what is relevant. Grounded theory does not force data to fit with a predetermined theory but rather builds and generates a theory which will then provide me with tools I can use to build on it through the data that is to be collected, through comparisons, thereby helping me to link concepts (Moghaddam, 2006).

In order to make sense of the collected data, a constructivist content and thematic analysis approach was therefore adopted. These enabled me to treat interview data not simply as “representations of the world”, but as “part of the world they describe” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 107; and Silverman 2000). As such, I conducted an iterative thematic approach to analysis which was inductive (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006), enabling “a repeated interaction among existing ideas, former findings and observations, and new ideas” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 156). The de approach to analysis therefore enabled me to take note of where “patterns, themes, and categories [...] emerged out of the data”, which subsequently was also affected by my “theoretical frameworks, subjective perspectives, ontological and epistemological positions, and intuitive field understandings” (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). I therefore saw the organisation of my analysis as an important aspect in determining how my data would be organised for it to make sense of the original phenomenon under study as well as to convey the findings of my study.

An inductive content approach to analysis was adopted in order to develop an understanding of curriculum development and implementation. Pinar (1995) and Pacheco (2012) refer to curriculum development and implementation as complex phenomena, hence the use of inductive content approach which helps lead to the identification of themes. In order for the data to be appropriately analysed, I firstly had to ‘tidy it up’ for me to start coding. This stage involved me making copies of all interview transcripts, classroom observations sheets and FGD notes and creating separate files for each specific criterion and per participant group – so, I had separate interview transcripts folders for policy makers, teachers, students. I organised this by separating data on different topics around curriculum development and stakeholder engagement; selection and organisation of content; school, teacher and students’ characteristics; and teaching, learning and assessment practices. This was done so that I could relate these back to my research questions. Once I did this, I created the separate files on my computer, allowing me to compare them against my research sub-questions.
I was able to do all this through the use of Dedoose which is a cross-platform application (developed by UCLA academics) for analysing qualitative (and quantitative) data. It is an alternative to other qualitative data analysis software like Nvivo. Dedoose only works for iMac computers and laptops whereas problems have been associated with Nvivo on iMacs. By going through this process, I was able to identify any gaps in the data and if necessary, revisit the field sites and collect additional data in order to address my overarching research question. As is often the case, there was also other data which I collected that was later found to be irrelevant for the study.

Once the data was tidied up, I then moved on to finding the items, i.e., things that I could code. This process involved going through transcripts, field notes and text in order to identify relevant items in relation to the request questions. At this stage, I was looking for frequency (the number of times a concept/idea appeared), omissions (why certain things never appear), inconsistencies (differences between responses and/or policy documents), and declarations (things that appear in data like policies yet do not necessarily appear anywhere else) (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle, 1992; LeCompte, 2000). As Plummer (1995, p. 13) states, it is “not simply what people say” that we should pay attention to, but rather “the complex social processes involved in the tellings” (original emphasis). It was therefore important for me to question “how the narrators position[ed] audiences and, reciprocally, how the audience position[ed] the narrator” (Reissman, 2001, n.p.n.) within these parameters, and how (and why) they may have responded to me in the way they did. As indicated in Chapter One, the understanding of what happens at the policy (macro) level and at the curriculum (micro) level, also influenced the structure of analysis.

Once the coding was concluded, themes had to be identified through the organisation of the codes into groups and categories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), by putting similar items together and also through identifying distinctions between different kinds of items. During analysis I identified that: LS[B]E is a kind of health education with abstinence being a major part of it; a needs assessment is an important stage/step in curriculum development; higher HIV transmission rates in adolescents is a result of a lack of CSE; and reaching a consensus is a stage in curriculum development. In addition to the themes that emerged, there were sub-themes as well, e.g. on additional SE sources like peers, church, family, etc. For example, through the topics that students selected to discuss in their FGDs, I was able to understand which categories mattered
mostly to them – using participants to create taxonomies.

The fourth step involved creating a pattern of things/concepts that were linked together in a meaningful way. This process was crucial as “establishing the regularities within a cultural scene, identifying the most important patterns can help to clarify ways to solve problems in a program or begin creating explanations for what happened during its duration” (LeCompte, 2000, p. 150). In this stage, similarity and analogy, such as: co-occurrence (e.g., being alone with a girl/boyfriend after school); sequence (e.g., girls dropping out of school after teenage pregnancy); hypothesised reasonableness (e.g., uncomfortableness of teachers around sexual issues); and corroboration (e.g., lack of resources such as guides and textbooks for teachers and students and incentives to teach and learn), were essential. The final stage involved assembling the data into linked patterns, i.e., through the creation of taxonomies of ‘themes’ at different levels of abstraction, e.g., the importance of educating youth on HIV and AIDS, leading to the importance of preparing teachers on HIV and AIDS education, which in turn leads to the development of the LS[B]E curriculum as a mandatory subject. This laborious stage involved a lot of cutting, pasting, mixing and matching, triangulating and assembling patterns.

In order to ensure data credibility and validity, the data must yield results that are meaningful to people for whom it is intended and in an accessible language. In order to ensure that I had properly captured the items that emerged, preliminary findings were shared at a teacher training workshop (on LSE) in 2016 in Lilongwe with policy makers and teachers, who were part of the study. This engagement provided an opportunity for the respondents to add any further information as well as correct any information that may not have been reported accurately. While not much information had changed, when describing my observation of how teachers interacted with different sex students, it was evident that teachers did not realise their teaching was more didactic, than learner-centred as curriculum stipulated and teachers acknowledged they could improve their future pedagogic practices to encourage more learner-centred approaches as per curriculum requirements. In addition, the teachers were equally surprised at their own gender biases though these had to be pointed out to them during the validation process. I reached out to the students via the school in my third field visit so they could also get a glimpse of what I had drawn from the data, for their learning, as well as to enable them draw from such new learning pedagogies. This was also one
way of ensuring that all key participants could assess whether or not the relationships and patterns I displayed were ones they recognised as valid. The outcome of the validation process on my part entailed me to revisit some of the specific terms I had used in my report, for instance any reference to ‘sex education’ or ‘HIV and AIDS education’ was replaced with ‘Life Skills’ as that is what the respondents were familiar with. In addition, this process helped participants to understand how curriculum development (at policy level) was then linking to the practical on the ground (at micro level) thereby providing space for any possible improvements for their own practice.

3.5.2 Discourse analytical framework

This research explores the discourse around HIV and AIDS transmission and prevention knowledge production, implementation and assessment. Discourse here refers to “the capacity of meaning-making resources to constitute social reality, forms of knowledge and identity within specific social contexts and power relations” (Hall 1997, p. 220). As such, the study renders itself fully across the descriptive-critical continuum which enables it to go beyond the linguistic meaning of the specific policy (i.e., Malawi HIV and AIDS Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector (2014-2018)) from which the curriculum is developed. Thus, it adopts discourse analysis as its analytical approach (Bennett and Frow, 2008). Discourse analysis allows me to explore the language within the text (beyond the sentence bounding and through interpretations of natural use of language) emanating from the different actors involved in developing the curriculum. While this study did not necessarily analyse the main policy, it is rather through the curriculum itself and the language used by respondents that it ‘privileges positionality and subjectivity’ (Resissman, 2000, n.p.n) thereby rejecting objectivity.

Discourse analysis is not new in education research as it has been employed in various studies (on how identities are taken up, constructed, enacted, or performed in and through narrative or story telling). For instance, the work of Michel Foucault refers to discourse analysis not only in terms of its formal linguistic aspects, but also in relation to institutionalised patterns of knowledge which then become manifest in disciplinary structures operating through the connection of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1988). Foucault’s social construction of reality looks at theories of discourse and power with the theory of knowledge, thereby focusing on the institutional contexts where knowledge is developed/produced and integrated though the subject mainly appears to
be determined by knowledge and power. Fraser (2004) agrees that discourse analysis reveals how power operates, and that it is legitimised or challenged in and through discourses.

LSE uses cognitive psychology (similar to Piaget (1971) for example) to a larger extent as the learning depends on students remembering/recalling information and thereby using critical reasoning to make decisions. But it has been debated over time as to whether human thought is perceived to be experiential (empiricism), or indeed innate knowledge (rationalism). It has also been observed that with issues around HIV and AIDS education, perhaps behaviourism, which views mental events, is more appropriate. Discourse analysts are not only interested in themes but also in how different versions of ‘reality’ are represented in discourse, as well as how these realities are constructed to achieve various acts.

The focus of this analysis is therefore on constructions that respondents produced, any rhetorical devices that they employed, and the implications stemming from these. Specifically, in order to understand how power is exercised on the development and implementation decisions relating to HIV and AIDS education in Malawi, this research focuses its analysis on how respondents communicated control, as well as a lack or loss thereof, through “locutions (what is uttered), illocutions (doing something whilst saying something) and perlocutions (achieving something by saying something), by textual analysis, ideological analysis and ideology critique” (Potter and Wetherell, 1994, p. 47). Different areas are analysed here with the first being around how participants constructed the different realities of the past and present, mostly aiming to communicate control (of specific sexual behaviour); and the second being around respondents’ accounts of contradictory communication showing a lack of or loss of control.

Discourse analysis helps to explore how underlying social systems shape (and are shaped by) interaction; how identities are constructed in and through talk; the relationship between interaction and learning in both formal and informal educational contexts; and how embodiment, multimodality, and virtual spaces offer new sites of analysis, which raises important questions about what new modes of communication imply for discursive methods of research and representation.
3.6 Ethics and study limitations

3.6.1 Ethics

Research involving human beings is so often obstructive, therefore governed by a set of principles as well as guidelines (Creswell, 2009; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2013). My research received ethical approval from the University of Sussex’s Social Sciences and Arts Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (SSA C-REC) in August 2013 (see Appendix 1). In addition to the university’s ethical approval, this study also considered any child protection procedures that were in place in Malawi, as there was very little information as to what other ethical requirements on the ground were (hence the recruitment of my research assistant described in Section 4.7.2 below). Once in the school setting, it was envisaged that due to the ages of the students, i.e., 15 to 21 years old, there was no need to seek parental consent as the students were capable of giving fully informed consent for participation. This was further confirmed by a state official and the research assistant, as well as by the headteacher at the study school. Whilst students could give their own consent, the importance of their ‘right to withdraw’ was emphasised so that they were aware they were not forced to participate against their will (Morrow, 2008). Overall, the research practised ‘beneficence’ and ‘non-malifence’, i.e., doing good and no harm, and maximising the research outcome for both the participants and the society (UNICEF, 2012). Participants were therefore aware that they could withdraw at any time and that their confidentiality was of importance (see Appendix 3 for elites and Appendix 4 for students for more details).

The study also used documentary review, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and FGDs. Interviews bring a specific ethical dimension as they are concerned with interpersonal interaction. It is therefore imperative to ensure that participants clearly understand issues of informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews; as Kvale (1996) clearly states, these need to be ‘unpacked’ (p. 11-20) (see Appendices 2 and 3). McCulloch (2008) also suggests careful consideration when dealing with documentary evidence, as it is bound to bring up dilemmas where the text might appear to cast an unfavourable light on specific institutes. While policies are meant to be in the public domain, they are not easily accessible in Malawi. It was therefore essential for me to handle such documents carefully and ethically as well as ensuring that my understanding of the policies was also sense-checked with the person who enabled me to access the documents. To cross-
reference what was in the policies, it was important to combine with other methods, e.g., interviews with policymakers, and interviews with teachers about the curriculum and pedagogical practices, therefore promoting methodological pluralism (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

Conducting research in the area of sex and sexuality is perceived to be prohibitively sensitive, i.e. there is a perception that children should not be included as it could be potentially harmful to them (Barnyard and Flanagan, 2005; Lee, 1994; Renzetti and Lee, 1993) though it is essential to include them. According to Horton (2008, p. 363), the sensitivities are due to “the comments that the young people make; questions they ask; and accusations that can fly – despite having a well-designed methodology which will have gone through a rigorous review”. O’Sullivan (2003) agrees that it is difficult to find the best means of asking sensitive questions to young people and this includes the impact of data collection, the question formats and the contexts in which these questions are asked.

Lifestyle and health related behaviours and environments are grounded in cultural values and social norms. Health promotion, which HIV and AIDS fall under, is a socially embodied “value field” with its mission aiming to “promote a sanitary culture, one that locates health at the top of a hierarchy of cultural values and social goals” (McLeroy, 1993, n.p.n.). These ethical issues always arise around morality, or even form an alternative strategy of religious control of deviance in modern societies. According to Lupton (1996) health promotion is a form of “secular religion” in the context of which the new ‘priests’ (health promotion professionals) define the impenetrable avenues (for the citizen uninitiated in the epidemiology of risk) of health protection via the identification of secular ‘sins’ (voluntary exposure to risk factors, refusal to modify at-risk behaviour). In this view, health promotion professionals behave more like proselytising missionaries preaching an ideology than neutral and impartial scientists who are the legitimate experts and protectors of public health. As with HIV, many people are convinced that diseases are often self-inflicted, i.e., the result of one’s own bad lifestyles or imprudent behaviours, which resonates with the moral public discourse that places the burden of responsibility for illness on individuals.

Since this research was also conducted in a health education setting, it was important
to draw on ethical dimensions as there has been a call for greater awareness around the ethical dimensions of public health policies. Health educators play a prominent role in leading public discussions of the issues of health promotion around the moral principles of sex including the principles of utility, autonomy and justice. It was of course important for me to respect the liberty and privacy of respondents (Hall, 1992) and not to coerce them but to acquire their fully informed consent. This is especially the case where the research involves “the enactment of policies that affect the participants” (McLeroy et al., 1993, p. 314). As such, further considerations needed to be examined around individual responsibilities to ensure there was no victim blaming, biases in interventions, and societal obsessions with health.

Whilst participants could give their consent freely, it was still emphasised at several points during the data collection that they could withdraw at any time if they wanted to without any repercussions. In addition to respondents’ confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw at any point, were regularly reviewed throughout the study. To preserve anonymity, the names of all participants and the name of the school where classroom observations took place have all been changed and instead pseudonyms have been used for teachers, whereas government and non-governmental officials are simply referred to as ‘state official’ and ‘non-state official’. Similarly, students are not identified by their names but by number, i.e., ‘student001: age gender’ etc.

Classroom observations required me to gain authorisation not only from DIAS, but also from students, headteacher and Forms 1 and 2 LS[B]E teachers. Being aware of my own culture as well as that of the school was therefore important as I did not want to make the teachers or students feel uncomfortable in any way. I wanted to ensure that teachers were not seeing me as an official ‘inspector’ and ensure that the behaviour of students was not changed by my presence considering it was covert research. Conducting classroom observations enabled me to check whether what had been stated by teachers and students in interviews was consistent with the classroom context. For example, teachers may indicate they have no objection to teaching SHE and yet in the classroom, avoid it; or where students may indicate they get all the essential information from teachers in classroom when observations show otherwise. As Mitchell (1983) points out, covert research enables observations of power dynamics where participants who feel powerless stay silent and also that silences sometimes will illuminate strongly held issues and beliefs.
3.6.2 Study limitations

Firstly, it is worth reiterating here that the first part of the study focusing on the development process of the LS[B]E curriculum, including its organisation of teaching and learning, has been reported retrospectively as the process took place in 2004 whereas the research was undertaken between 2013 and 2015. As such, the findings are based on participants’ recollections of the process rather than on my first-hand experiences and therefore does not include my own observations and conclusions as to how the entire process was undertaken. There is a possibility that some of the data collected during this part of the study may have been altered by participants to fit with my areas of study thereby obscuring the true nature of the process itself as it happened. However, my study findings imply that what I reported was similar to the process that was followed, as my findings are similar to other studies that have been conducted in the same area, as reported by other education scholars. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009, p. 15) contend that curriculum development encompasses how a “curriculum is planned, implemented and evaluated, as well as what people, processes and procedures are involved”. In addition, Tyler’s (1949) curriculum model encouraged the curriculum planners to have questions regarding the selection of educational purposes, the determination of experiences, the organisations of experiences and the provision for evaluation. Similarly, Popham (2008) developed a technical, means-to-end reasoning model which emphasised learning objectives.

Secondly, as part of the research design, a questionnaire was originally employed for student sampling and selection (Wilson and McLean, 1994). The questionnaire was administered in two selected classes comprising 212 students in total. The questionnaire was used to avoid any sample bias that may have come up should the school have selected the sample for me, as the school would have chosen students they felt were the most intelligent. However, upon completion of the questionnaire, it was decided that as a tool, it was not appropriate for my study as some of the questions were not completed with other parts being completed and other answers that were unclear. As such, the questionnaire was later removed from the entire research design. Adopting Allen’s (2005, p. 24) concept of a “building block” to inform my next design step, I reviewed what other additional tools I could use to collect this information. As such, student participants were asked to volunteer (rather than through selection), which created
a selection bias as only those who could be able to stay after school were able to participate. In order to reduce this bias, a further opportunity was provided for those unable to participate after school to consider participating during school breaks. Names of all students who volunteered were put on pieces of paper in a hat and selected. Additionally, data was collected using other methods including interviews and classroom observations which also helped validate my findings. In addition, the study involved a specific number of policy makers and only one school (two specific classes, where I ensured both sexes and varying ages were included). Qualitative research is often seen as not being objective as it involves a small sample which may not be representative of the broader population. In addition, the results could be biased towards my own experience and/or opinions. The findings of my study are therefore limited to a small number of participants with classroom observations at only one school in Malawi, and therefore cannot be generalised, though the findings could be used in a much wider study to inform future research.

Any policy-related research is deemed sensitive because it deals with key issues of policy generation and decision making which also bring debates and contestations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). As such gaining access was important, as well as assuring some of those ‘powerful’ elite participants on issues of confidentiality, since some information was given in confidence and either “on the record” or “off the record” (Fitz and Halpin, 1994, p. 35-6). My use of repeated semi-structured interviews helped with negotiating my way through the questions thereby allowing me to “monitor the proceedings and interject where deemed fitting” (p. 38), and “to take notes” (p. 47). While I experienced what Gewirtz and Ozga (1994, p. 192-3) refer to as “misrepresentation of the research intention, loss of researcher control, mediation of the research process, compromise and researcher dependence”, the use of snowballing helped me as I was introduced to these interviewees through non-state participants who emphasised the importance of my research and that it was in no way political in nature. Access to conduct the study was eventually granted by the MoEST as per Appendix 2.

3.7 My role in the research

3.7.1 Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity
Conducting research in one’s home country has its advantages and disadvantages. Through my knowledge of the society and culture, and my ability work in the local language, access to information and people was “privileged” (Desai and Potter, 2006, p. 106); I had repeated access and there was no need for me to re-negotiate entry. By conducting this research in Malawi, my birth country, I anticipated that my researcher positionalities would be in flux while carrying out research (Lukose, 2009). I was seen both as an ‘insider’ as well as an ‘outsider’ having come from the diaspora, i.e., living abroad for nearly two decades. It was therefore important for me to reflect on my cultural background, thoughts, actions, emotions, assumptions, and unconscious responses, in order to determine how these particular factors may influence the research process and findings (Finlay, 1998; Smith, 2013).

The way participants responded to me provided a clear indication of how they perceived my different identities: as Malawi-born; as one living abroad and therefore seen as a ‘foreigner’ in the first instance, i.e., a Western researcher; and a married woman travelling on her own away from family speaking to other married men in a country where patriarchy is the norm. This presented several challenges for me as a researcher as it meant I had to adopt different identities at different times depending on whom I was meeting with or observing.

As I was born and raised in Malawi, I am quite aware of the customary traditions and expectations, e.g., how I am supposed to interact with the elderly and males especially in rural settings. In order to interact with the elders, e.g., the teachers at the selected study school, I had to dress appropriately to show respect as well as to not distract teachers or students from their teaching and learning respectively. Despite observing that Malawi has generally transitioned from the conservative dress styles for women such as long dresses or skirts to the more modern ways of dressing, e.g., short skirts or dresses above the knee or trousers, it was obvious that at the selected study school they were still very much promoting a conservative way of dressing. As a result, I had to dress up conservatively by wearing full-length dresses and long skirts (despite the hot weather) when in an official environment such as the school or the various ministerial departments or NGO offices.

In addition to this strategic ‘Malawian’ self-representation, students’ initial perceptions of me were to some extent influenced by their first impressions of me when I was
introduced at the school by the headteacher as ‘Madam’ when I first interacted with them. My position with the students was compromised at the outset as I was introduced as someone who was visiting from the UK (which most students found intriguing and interesting at the same time as I could speak the Chichewa fluently too). As the main language for instruction is English, I therefore only spoke to the students in English in the first instance.

Since I was introduced as ‘Madam’ (despite being smaller than some of the students), my interactions with students were affected as I was seen as ‘one of the teachers’; hence the way they addressed me was similar to how they addressed their teachers. My liminal status (as someone who looked Malawian and spoke fluent Chichewa but who was not quite Malawian due to my diaspora position, and as someone who seemed like an authority figure but did not quite act like one), only made the students more curious. They also attempted to interact with me on an informal basis, ignoring the formal address their authority figure expected them to use.

The participants (particularly in the school setting) were quite shocked at how culturally connected I was to their traditional values via the way I dressed, how respectfully I addressed all my elders, how I could speak to students using their slang language and even sharing jokes, and through contributing to and eating together with the teachers as part of ‘mmemo’ (group lunch that is shared based on who contributes financially). We used to have mid-morning tea and we all contributed money towards scones which we shared in the staff room. Because of all this, the gap that had been created in the first instance with me being seen as an ‘outsider’ was diffused, and in no time I was seen as one of them.

My position was at times compromised when I made comments and/or responses obviously shaped by my pre-existing research knowledge, and as such, I was perceived as a ‘westernised’ Malawian. For instance, when I tried to inquire further about the moral underpinnings of sex before marriage and its disconnection from the promoted health habits of using a condom or being faithful to one’s partner, I would at times be told point blank that it was not expected that the students would be practising sex anyway, and therefore the issue was not up for discussion. In addition, when a meeting was held at the school of girls only on issues around sex and sexuality, there was an instance where a student stated that if it were not for her boyfriend then she would not
be able to attend school as, being an older man, he was the one responsible for paying the school fees. Whilst some of these instances made me feel uncomfortable, I did not want to cross the line of challenging their ‘moral understandings’ even though I also wanted emphasise the importance of such preventative measures for their benefit.

The fact that I was able to travel on my own (as a Malawian woman), without my spouse and children, made some respondents, especially the elderly, uncomfortable around me. Over time, I learnt which topics to broach with participants who seemed conservative in their ways of responding and I employed means of extracting information without making them feel uncomfortable. In addition, over the course of my time spent out in the field in the education settings as well as various offices, I established good relationships with all participants, which undoubtedly contributed to my confidence in the different settings and my ability to probe without making participants uncomfortable or dismissive. Obviously, some of their responses were still shaped by how they perceived me and their impressions of what they thought I may have wanted to hear (Berg and Howard, 2012). As such, I had to manage expectations of my respondents in order to ensure that they were not telling me ‘what they thought I needed to hear’ and also that I was not promising to solve any issues that may have arisen during the fieldwork.

I was seen as a “professional stranger” (Flick, 1998, p. 59) coming “without history” (Wolff, 2004, p. 198) and “one who has to be accepted, become familiar and yet remain distant from those being studied” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison., 2007, p. 197). Being sensitive to my own cultural, political and social context enabled me to take a reflective approach to the implications of the “methods, values and biases, and decisions for the knowledge of the social world” (Bryman, 2012, p. 393) which I generated. Being aware of my position and recognising that I was inescapably part of an already interpreted social world which I was researching (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) helped me design my research accordingly.

3.7.2 Introducing my Research Assistant

Once access was granted, I considered how some of the students would perhaps find responding to my questions inappropriate and uncomfortable – more so in the company of peers from the opposite sex. As I was conducting research around a sensitive topic, I was advised by people on the ground that it would be appropriate to recruit a children’s
expert who would assist with FGDs. The emic (insider) perspective can be problematic due to the blurred boundary lines that lie between the research and practice, making it difficult for the researcher to distance themselves from events and interactions and gain oversight. I made contacts with youth-based NGOs based in Lilongwe city and eventually I was introduced to Harry, a 30-year-old children and welfare expert who was well-placed to assist with my research based on his experience and background with working with young people. Based on his experience in the field, we developed some research tools specifically for the students and he was able to offer useful feedback and guidance on questions which he felt were appropriate with the study.

Upon gaining students’ consent, it was established that none of the (male and female) students had any issues with his presence. His presence in these FGDs therefore facilitated the data collection while he also maintained an important critical perspective (Krueger, 1988). Integrity was therefore a big part of my study especially during reporting which required diplomacy and sensitivity while ensuring that no harm was being caused to students. My research assistant was also aware that he could challenge me especially when he noticed that any students showing signs of distress during the FGDs (though this never happened). As my research assistant was a children’s expert, he applied the necessary techniques to ensure that all students felt safe and at ease in order to glean more information (including slang terms) from the students.

While I was using a digital recorder for the discussions, Harry also helped me with taking down notes during FGDs, which would have been impossible for me to do whilst also facilitating the group discussions. By having Harry, it allowed for a composite view of responses. The downside however as indicated by Merriam (1998) is that sometimes researchers may not always agree on all aspects of the study, let alone the direction that the study should take; and there could be differing cultural values which can cause dissension regarding what was observed or within a team.

In my case, it was therefore important to establish these boundaries and a justification of research procedures and ensure that there was member checking prior to data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Both the research assistant and I agreed on meanings of terms and summaries used during the discussion to ensure the transcription was accurate, as well as to reinforce trustworthiness. This also helped in ensuring that students were happy for us to record as we translated their responses,
thereby ensuring reliability of data. This allowed a continuous self-reflection process (Anderson, 2008; Lambert, Jomeen and McSherry, 2010; Hughes, 2014). As can be seen in Appendix 2, proper procedures of where data was to be kept and how it was to be accessed were clearly explained to ensure the confidentiality that we had assured participants of.

As it was established that having mixed FGDs was not suitable, students were split into single- sex only groups. While I facilitated all FGDs, Harry also picked up on some observations of the group dynamics, interactions and reactions which were also an important part of the FGDs.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the philosophical approach behind the study’s research methodology and analysis. In addition, it has provided information about the study sample, as well as about the secondary school where the classroom observations took place, in order to contextualise the study. The next chapter presents the first part of the study findings from the LS[B]E’s curriculum development process.

4.1 Introduction

This study was initiated with the new need to understand how transnational education policies impact on Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy (alongside other specific policies including the Malawi’s Education Act) in order for it to be interpreted into the LS[B]E curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment. The curriculum development was studied after the actual process itself had taken place whereas the implementation was studied as it happened. As such everything is reported retrospectively in this chapter, since it focuses on the development process only. Chapter Five addresses the first research question: ‘what are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning, and assessment?’.

The chapter therefore explores the curriculum development process itself, to understand the discourses and ideas that emanate beyond the ‘text’ (what is said), in what arena it was said (where), by whom (actors), in what language (how), and how the ideas were legitimized (why). In order to understand these discourses and ideas, the analysis is presented on the three CT, structure and agency levels presented in Chapter Two above (i.e., macro/policy; micro/curriculum; and classroom) (Lundgren 2015; Englund 2011; Deng and Luke 2008).

Policy as a discourse can be viewed in analytical terms as power webs underlying the practices of the different actors. The discursive and non-discursive practices which are invented in policy negotiations and contestations can be viewed in a similar way (Cohen at al., 2011a). This chapter provides a foreground understanding of education reform to help contextualise what processes were involved in the development of the curriculum, who the actors were, and how they organised the curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment – revealing whose voices were heard and/or silenced (O’Neill, 2010). As observed by Seidel and Vidal (1997, p. 59), there is “a particular way of thinking and arguing” in any policy process setting which are complex and messy with different actors’ interests, beliefs and values. Habermas (1989, 1996) elaborates further that such interactions however need to be distinguished between ‘arguing’, which involves persuasion, from ‘bargaining’, which involves strategic action. I argue that through the
retrospective ‘consultative’ process, power, though not always fixed as it shifts within
the network, is always at play through the coordinative and communicative discourses
which are evident in the final curriculum. Additionally, while it is an expert-dominated
development process, it also shows the broader societal influences towards the
curriculum which then affect how the final consensus is reached.

The data analysed in this chapter is therefore derived from a review of documents
(including the final LSE curriculum (2004 version), Malawi Education Act (1964), the
Malawi National HIV and AIDS Education Sector Plan, and the Malawi HIV and AIDS
Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector (2014-2018), and some discussions on
the Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Review, National Symposium Report
(MoEST and MIE, 2012). It is also derived from interviews with: policy makers involved
in the curriculum development process (from respective government ministries and
departments, as well as independent NGOs); CBO and CSO professionals; and academic
HIV and AIDS researchers (see Chapter Three for the summary of organisations
involved).

While the chapter shows the distinct discourses which reflect the various actors’
involvement and how this shapes the final LS[B]E, it further shows there are some
intersections between these discourses. The chapter is therefore arranged around the
following analytical levels: macro/policy (4.2) which analyses who the actors are, and
what values and principles form the basic assumptions of societal norms; and
micro/curriculum (4.3), which analyses LS[B]E’s objectives and content selection. Section
4.4 then presents the classroom level discourses, looking at how the teaching and
assessment is organised. The chapter concludes with Section 4.5.

4.2 Macro/policy underpinnings that inform LS[B]E curriculum

Malawi’s adoption of the LSE curriculum in the late 1990s was a vehicle for realising wider
change, brought about by the political shift from a one-party system to democracy as
well as in response to HIV and AIDS. LS[B]E was identified as a key component in the
international response framework for HIV and AIDS in the late 1990s by the Joint United
National Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). This was further recognised in the UN
General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Declaration Commitment on HIV and AIDS
in 2001 with a core national indicator for assessing coverage of school-based LSE for HIV
Malawi’s LSE draws heavily on WHO’s *Skills for Health* approach which advocates a “skills-based health education which is an approach to creating or maintaining healthy lifestyles and conditions through the development of knowledge, attitudes, and especially skills, using a variety of learning experiences, with an emphasis on participator methods” (WHO, 2001, p. 3). In addition to signing up to the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), which guides EFA, Malawi is also a signatory to several other frameworks including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); and the 2030 Global Agenda for SDG goals and targets (which includes life skills as part of two of the six SDGs which focus on learning needs of young people; and essential outcomes of quality education).

Malawi’s rationale for LSE’s inclusion as a means to create behaviour change through the curriculum is clearly outlined in the HIV and AIDS Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector as outlined below:

“The Strategy will adopt the HIV and AIDS integration approach in the curriculum with a view to bringing about visible behaviour change among teachers/lecturers and learners […] In the integration approach, HIV and AIDS and reproductive health are taken to be cross cutting issues to be addressed in all subject areas and become examinable as part of those subjects.” (MoEST, 2014, p. 27)

For many decades, instruction about health and healthy behaviours had been described as ‘health education’. Health education is often subsumed under the broader term of ‘health promotion’, which according to Green and Kreuter (1991) is a combination of educational and environmental supports for actions and conditions of living conducive to health. Health education interventions mostly happen in institutional settings, emphasizing WHO’s assertion of schools being seen as one of the most organized and powerful systems in society to influence the health and wellbeing of those who come there. However, Green (1980) refers to this as “misplaced emphasis” (p. 793) agreeing with Kolbe et al. (1986) who point out that schools are neither medical institutions nor public health agencies.

Health education has taken three main approaches despite evolving. On the one hand, Stetson and Davis (1999) emphasised on: conventional which emphasises knowledge
acquisition; health communication which seeks to modify human behaviour and environmental factors, which is usually through strong persuasive communication messages (Stroebe and Stroebe, 1995), as well as model of behaviour change; and empowerment, which aims at empowering target populations, e.g. the use of child to child approaches like peer education for HIV prevention in Africa (Turner and Shepherd, 1999). On the other hand, Paakkari (2015) refers to these three approaches: facts and skills approach; the individual thinking approach; and the personal growth and citizenship approach.

According to Bandawe (2009), child to child approaches bring a notion of empowerment. Malawi’s health education has evolved from germ theory to the promotion of pit latrine usage, and through to bush clearance (ibid), presenting a shift in pedagogical thinking about efficacy. Malawi’s information, education and communication activities are therefore guided by health education strategies, whose philosophy underpins the health delivery system. As such, health education is often presented as a synthesis and translation of the various health messages into meaningful packages targeting specific populations (often viewed as vulnerable). According to Chowa (1995) health education cannot be carried out in isolation from other health programmes, which resonates with WHO’s Skills for Health which recognises the importance of coherent and coordinated approaches, incorporating related school initiatives such as school health programmes, and based in contextual lessons from pilot projects that can be scaled to national levels. Malawi initially pilot-tested LSE in four districts (out of 24 at the time) in 1998, before a full roll-out to the wider nation.

‘When this [LSE] was started it was pilot-tested [...], to see if it would be widely accepted and also if it had been appropriately planned as a programme.’

The MoEST actor’s statement here demonstrates how what was initially a coordinative discourse then shifted to being a communicative discourse through which the state sought opinions of the communities in which the programme was being pilot-tested, allowed it to be trialed and refined before the full implementation. By adopting such a model, it supports WHO’s blueprint approach which advocates the importance of “going to scale” (WHO, 2012, p. 33) in order that such skills-based health education approaches are effective. Furthermore, Smith and Colvin (2000) agree that programmes should be prepared to scale up by focusing on institutionalisation (i.e., training, changes in
Skills development has always been included in health education. Psychosocial and interpersonal skills are central and include: communication; decision making and problem-solving; coping and self-management; and the avoidance of health-compromising behaviours. According to Bomba (1981) Malawi’s approach to health education was through mobile health clinics which produced materials and a reservoir of visual aids through outreach vans. The global health education has however evolved due to the growing recognition of, and evidence for, the role of psychosocial and interpersonal skills in the ongoing development of young people from an earlier age. Thus, attention to knowledge, attitudes, and skills together (with an emphasis on skills) is an important feature that distinguishes skills-based education from other ways of educating youth about health issues.

Malawi’s education has shifted from purely traditional or indigenous (preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holismism) to being based on physical, social and spiritual dimensions of time, to the 19th Century when formal education was introduced by Christian missionaries who focused on literacy. The purpose of this, according to Mtika (2008) was mainly to ‘civilise’ the indigenous population through the teaching of Christian values. During Malawi’s era of colonial rule (1891–1964) education goals focused on: personal hygiene; use of the environment; home life; use of leisure time; literacy and numeracy; moral development and religious life. When Malawi became independent of British rule in 1964, its curriculum changed in order to respond to the need at the time; hence the training of agriculturalists, carpenters, engineers, social specialists, community workers, teachers, nurses, and construction workers.

Malawi’s adoption of an outcomes-based curriculum in 2007 was borne from curriculum reform in 2001 (see Chapter Two above), which was revealed upon examining how the curriculum was developed, as it emerged that the framing of LS[B]E was to some extent influenced by transnational, national and local policy arenas on education. It has been pointed out by Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008, p. 7) that “globalisation has had an effect on education systems with some prominence which has led to increasing convergences of ideas and practices (including those of education) across national contexts”, thus the education agenda is increasingly set globally (Dale and Robertson, 2002).
It has been argued (Slee and Stambach, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012; Savage and O’Connor, 2015) that though transnational education policies indisputably affect how national policies are framed, they do not determine their final shape as this is also affected by a myriad of factors including the context in which they are implemented. As has been stated, policies are ‘boundless’ in their discursive communication. Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) further argue that policies can circulate between levels, moving down from the international to the national, while being reshaped at each stage in the process to suit local circumstances. While another reform took place in Malawi in 2015, it is not referred to in this study.

4.2.1 Whose values matter: comprehensive or partial?

As Luke, Woods and Weir (2012) asserts, through curriculum development, societies share common values on what is important and what is not. It is also important to question ‘whose skills’ are being developed through LSE. Wahlström and Sundberg (2018) further assert that curriculum should indeed be relevant, appropriate and responsive to the needs of individual learners and the society, hence it should be influenced by internal, historical, economic, social and political factors as well as external conditions and ideas. Malawi’s LSE curriculum development was initiated by the MoEST (through the MIE) with a needs assessment which involved the collection of evidence providing an insight as to what was working, in which contexts, and how it was working. The iterative needs assessment went through a series of stages and was not necessarily linear, as stated by a state actor below:

‘First of all, before we develop our curriculum or review the one that is already on the ground, we begin with a Needs Assessment ... we look at what other people are doing. ... we find some good practices. ...then we take it for conceptualisation at a workshop ... to interpret... before we go to conceptualisation, we sometimes hold a symposium... we seek their [stakeholders] input on any improvements of the curriculum... after symposium we translate this information into budget areas. So, at conceptualisation that’s when we say, we need Life Skills ... now we need to develop the curriculum with the help of the Syllabus Committee who then go through the selection of the topics before deciding on the resources to be used.’

The above resonates with what Posner (2012) describes as the valid approaches to curriculum planning where questions of procedure, description and concept are used.
Needs assessments are an integral part of curriculum development as they feed directly into how a programme (in this case, a curriculum) gets fully implemented. Such assessments are indeed needed for areas of (SRH) education where perceptions of communities’ understandings are essential, as the assessments would determine whether the programme would be readily accepted or not. As will be observed later in this chapter, sexuality discourses in Africa are often associated with conservative and silent communication, where non- and pre-marital sex is unacceptable and condemned while virginity is highly valued due to the religious nature of such countries as Malawi (Kishindo, 2011).

Additionally, the importance of understanding learners’, teachers’, and communities’ attitudes towards such ‘sensitive’ topics is essential to the success and/or failure of such programmes. The findings of Malawi’s LSE needs assessment as stated by Kalanda (2010) revealed how the discourse of moral education has shaped how teachers perceive the curriculum, i.e. where teachers believe that adolescents should not be given the information as they prematurely become sexually active. Gordon (1981) and Lamb (1997) assert that moral education suggests that sex involves coercion, exploitation and that it is wrong. It is for these reasons that the importance of conducting a needs assessment should be emphasised. Richards (2002) underscores its importance as it provides a starting point for the systematic gathering of information to design a curriculum’s objectives.

It is through the needs assessment that MoEST reinforces both its cognitive (which serve to legitimate a common ground for action) and normative (which serve to legitimate a certain course of action) ideas. In cognitive terms, the MoEST ensures they are offering a solution (to HIV and AIDS) at policy level, while also defining how the problem is to be dealt with. They thereby indicate, through their coordinative communication, which principles and norms are relevant for dealing with the problem. In normative terms, they demonstrate how, through the consultative process of the needs assessment, such ideas will demonstrate what an ideal citizen would aspire to as the normal and acceptable way of life. It could therefore be argued that through such processes, MoEST then legitimises its purposes through the (re)construction and (re)situating of its policies.

However, past curriculum studies (Pinar, 2010) have noted that decisions on children’s
education are made by people who perceive themselves to be custodians of culture. Furthermore, Kirby (2012) points out the underlying assumptions about the gap that lies between what adults perceive as appropriate content and what youths really need. Contestations and debates around ‘whose knowledge counts’ range from Young’s (1971) ‘new sociology of education’, to the ‘critical and multiculturalist’ work of the 1960s (e.g., Nieto, 1999), through to the ongoing reconceptualist and queer theorists (e.g., Pinar, 2013). As reported by Luke, Woods and Weir (2012), these contestations tend to be between the ‘dominant’ views of culture, ideology and science; and ‘minority’ views of the world. But the importance of understanding culture and HIV and AIDS in SSA has been emphasised by Sovran (2013).

While Malawi’s adoption of a needs assessment was in line with the global recommendations, it was interesting to note that MoEST also wanted to agree on what to call the subject (rather than to naturally conform to what has been advocated for globally by multilateral institutions like WHO, or UNESCO, or UNAIDS). LSE, as will be observed later in this chapter, is a learner-centred subject with a variety of topics including HIV and AIDS, to some extent rendering it also a subject-centred curriculum. While there are differences and similarities in how different countries adopt transnational policies like LSE, Malawi’s context called for a review of what they wanted the curriculum to be referred to.

‘Different countries call it [LSE] different things – you go to Botswana, you’ll find ‘Guidance and Counselling’, you go to Tanzania, it’s a different thing and others here [Malawi] want to call it CSE. But whether you call it inclusive or comprehensive, sex and sexuality, LSBE, for us it is Life Skills.’

Given the global policy context around HIV and AIDS, the fact that LSE as a subject is called different things in different countries, as indicated by one of MoEST’s actors above, indicates that education transfer should therefore be understood as a ‘circular movement’. This contrasts with the linear model of education transfer which according to Steiner-Khamsi (2012) implies that governments do not have the opportunity to pick and choose from transnational policies’ ideologies, programmes and solutions as their origin and receiver systems are already determined. It is therefore not surprising in this study that actors ‘picked’ and ‘chose’ what they felt was appropriate in their context. Singh (2016) reports on the importance of ensuring curriculum is culturally appropriate and relevant, and capable of linking traditional and cultural knowledge
between homes, communities and schools, which is of equal importance when developing curriculum.

‘The main key is that life is a compendium of all different hurdles but one has to sail through them using decisions, resilience and then you look at skills where you have to determine whether culturally it is right ...so you find even here [Malawi] we are having a challenge in the sense that somebody comes from the UK, US, India, and they come and they say we want to tell you about LS[E]. So, the question is ‘whose life skills’? Is it ours or yours? Some of the things we see are unMalawian [sic] and unAfrican [sic]!’

While such views as expressed by the senior MoEST state actor above could be viewed as reticence by the state, given its conventional ways of teaching and learning, to adopt the global uniformity of education, it also denotes the authoritative and asymmetrical nature of the decision making that policymaker use through their persuasive communication discourse. As much as ‘life skills’ as a term does cover a broad range of abilities, competencies and approaches, it could also be interpreted from the reaction here that Malawi’s LSE then veers towards a values-based education approach where the specific values in a specific context are essential for gaining a unified sense of community.

According to Munthali, Chimbiri and Zulu (2004), both traditional and modern aspects of (Malawian) society create tensions between espoused values and practices embodied in certain rituals. For example, premarital sex and boy-girl relationships are strongly discouraged, while gendered power relations that put girls in particularly vulnerable and submissive positions when it comes to matters of sexuality are persistently practised and tolerated in Malawi. Makwemba et al. (2019) indicate that despite concerted efforts to abate them, there are still some harmful traditional practices that contradict such beliefs, e.g., fisi during initiation ceremonies. These tensions emanate from cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, where social norms and values, especially in the controversial area of sexuality, are in constant contradiction.

Remaining abstinent and a virgin in a country like Malawi where an estimated 68% and 25% are Christians and Muslims respectively (Malawi Population, 2019), is perceived to earn greater respect from society. And yet, the denial of adolescents’ sexuality has been shown in previous studies in West and Central Africa (UNFPA, 2013) and Malawi (Self et al., 2018) to further constrain adolescents’ access to and uptake of health services.
Soler-Hampejsek et al. (2013) conducted a study on Malawi’s adolescent sexual behaviour and reported that due to the lack of acceptance of adolescents’ sexual behaviour, girls are unlikely to admit being sexually active, and are more likely to report sexual activity inconsistently and to retract reports of ever having had sexual intercourse than their male peers. While supportive laws and policies which aim to facilitate adolescent access to health services exist in Malawi, in practice, services largely fall short in assisting adolescents. Additionally, the normalisation of such conservatism is further legitimised through the religious community as observed from a non-state respondent who identified as Christian:

‘You know in my Church; you cannot get married before they do a virginity test on you. They use anankungwi [elderly women] to check if a girl has maintained her virginity or not. And once found out that they are not a virgin anymore, they do not get married and worse still, they get talked about by everybody at that church and then it spreads to where they live meaning the girl is even more isolated.’

In as much as such normative definitions of expected female sexual behaviour exacerbate the patriarchal culture that devalues women since the stigma is only attached to women, normalisation of the virgin/whore dichotomy leaves victims (who are then labelled as sinners) ashamed after the experience thereby hindering youths in seeking medical help when needed.

‘Now one of the most important things in the Bible is the realisation that God uses sinners. Look at Rahab, she was a prostitute and yet she became the ancestor of Jesus. Look at Mary Magdalene, look at David, he committed adultery, Solomon had 300 wives, he forsook them all, but still God used him. God uses sinners.’

These religious interpretations of a non-state (woman) actor signify how sex is then seen as a ‘sinful’ act which adolescents are expected to repent from, thereby explaining why the curriculum has veered towards the moral framings. Despite the disapproval and proscriptions of premarital sex by the church, the 2017 MDHS study conducted on the sexual activity of adolescents indicates the median age of sexual debut for Malawian adolescents as 18 and 16 for males and females respectively. Furthermore, the fact that most schools in Malawi are aided by Christian organisations leads them to veer towards what Seidel (1993) refers to as a “medico-moral” (p. 178) discourse wherein infection is interpreted as God’s punishment.
Kirby (2012) further states that disapproval of non-marital sex and taboos surrounding sexuality is most evident in countries which are predominantly Christian (including Malawi), where sexual behaviour is seen as being exclusively for procreation in marriage. Skinner et al. (2012) report that certain aspects of traditional initiation rites continue to propel girls into sexual roles expected of them in adulthood, without any regard for their protection against the HIV virus. Makwemba et al. (2019) report that Malawian girls take part in initiation rituals more often than boys, and most prevalent in the southern part of Malawi in comparison to other regions, and also more common in rural areas than in urban areas. Some of these rituals are specifically sexually oriented sessions, e.g. sexual instruction and sexual practice, likely to make adolescents and young people engage in risky behaviour that would make them vulnerable to SRH infections. Despite these risks, Skinner et al. (2012) and Makwemba et al. (2019), argue that the sexual components of initiation are seen as useful, and note that some participants in their research noted some benefits from such ceremonies, such as practising good behaviours and health. At the same time, families that exclude their children from going through such ceremonies may be ostracised and stigmatised by their communities (MHRC, 2014).

MoEST, through its needs assessment, demonstrates how it has shifted its role from being the sole decision-maker concerning education. It has changed its role from being at the forefront of the coordinative discourse and has placed itself at the centre of the communicative discourse instead. By displacing the normative ideas to respond to a pluralist society and ensuring each person’s needs are met, there is a possibility of clash with meeting the human rights discourse. Competing and contradictory values emerge with some wanting a ‘culturally appropriate’ curriculum and others wanting a cognitively-based ‘CSE’ curriculum.

Malawi (alongside other countries) is a signatory to the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). A study by Milner et al. (2011) on Malawian pupil and teacher HIV and AIDS knowledge identified a knowledge gap between what teachers knew (adequate knowledge but very low pedagogical knowledge) and what pupils knew (very minimal knowledge). Further evidence from sector-wide larger studies conducted by UNAIDS (2015) and UNFPA (2012) have shown

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16 Initiation rites are where young people attend ceremonies around the time of puberty.
that a lack of access to accurate and preventative services and information is one of the reasons youths are more at risk of HIV infection. This suggests that normative ideas imparted through a limiting curriculum are not fit to cognitively prepare students with appropriate information about skills that could well protect them, e.g., through the appropriate use of condoms. Mensch et al. (2019) in their Malawian study on links between education and STIs among adolescents reported that the provision of CSE enables adolescents to take less risky behaviour, e.g., uptake of condom use, reduction of coital frequency, remaining monogamous, or attempting to choose lower-risk partners (e.g., their peers rather than older men/women). CSE approaches were favoured more by non-state actors than by state actors, though non-state actors were also split between promoting CSE and religious approaches.

However, conservative philosophies are not uncommon in Christian-aided schools whose curricula are underpinned by religious logics, and as such, may be hostile to alternative, non-conservative views. These views were strongly rejected by these (international) non-state (female) actors, who wanted to distance themselves from those that promote such conservative views:

‘... the religious groups are full of resistance. These people are supposed to be leaders in spreading the word and they don’t talk about it ... we can’t ignore it. And the religious people are supposed to be tolerant, but they are the most hateful people – they are full of hatred.’

‘Christian aided schools refuse to talk about [CSE]. They say we do not want to talk about the subject because you are encouraging the youth to engage in sex.’

While the above shows the disconnection within the coordinative cognitive discourses within the international and national arenas, it also signals the powerful nature of religious voices in conservative contexts. Equally, those actors who resist such philosophies may also be conflicted between the competing discourses of what international funders may stipulate as part of agreements, and their personal beliefs and values. For instance, Malawi’s funding for its HIV response in 2016 came from various donors including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Presidents Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) (74%); other donors (12%); and domestic funds (14%) (PEPFAR, 2017). The majority of this funding (47%) was spent on treatment and care, thus leaving large gaps in financial support for non-biomedical interventions including school-based initiatives like LSE. Nevertheless, PEPFAR (through USAID) has funded most HIV interventions in Malawi, including school-based initiatives
While evidence is unclear as to how PEPFAR influenced Malawi’s LS[BE] shape through funding conditions, it is believed that abstinence is the main underpinning philosophy. PEPFAR has been criticised by Jappah (2013) in a study conducted in Nigeria for trying to inject social conservatism, thereby bringing about a convergence of American and Nigerian religious conservatism to shape HIV and AIDS prevention programmes. A Malawian study conducted by Trinitapoli and Regnerus (2006) found that adolescents who attended religious services frequently were less likely to be sexually active than those who did not, and those who attended congregations in which AIDS was discussed frequently were even less likely to have engaged in sexual activity. Such conservative ideologies could be interpreted as reinforcing the nation’s moral emphasis, thereby legitimising MoEST’s conservative approach to SHE.

The GoM has also been at the forefront of promoting abstinence, particularly as observed during the study through the large billboards displayed throughout the country (promoted by MoH) which feature a picture of the ex-President (see image below).

![Image](image_url)

*Source: Author*

Alongside the promotion of abstinence, billboards for condoms have been banned. In 2002, 20 religious leaders criticised and condemned the advert below in a joint statement in the media, for depicting a woman who was showing part of her thigh (see image below).
The billboard was hotly debated in the country’s press by religious groups, civic bodies and women’s organisations and viewed as being an affront to Malawian values that would tempt youth to have sex. The joint statement emphasised that "while sex education is imperative in the wake of [the] HIV/AIDS pandemic, this does not warrant wanton display of naked figures" (Malawi Nation Newspaper, 3 June 2002). A leader from the Muslim Association of Malawi said "the new face of Chishango is offensive, pornographic and degrading. It reduces women to nothing but sex objects" (ibid). The article further quoted church leaders as saying: "enticing the population towards sex to promote the sale of Chishango is like happily dousing us with petrol for the sake of promoting fire extinguishers" (ibid). Since the implementation of its National Strategic Plan for HIV and the National Prevention Strategy (2015-2020), the promotion of equal and improved access to condoms by adolescents, young men and women, and key populations has been promoted through the Malawi National Condom Strategy (2015-2020) though uptake remains challenging (NAC, 2017).

Clearly, these messages – the promotion of abstinence and simultaneous outrage over condom adverts – signify a strong conservative cultural-religious and very strong moral stance to youth, as they highlight through coordinative discourses what the state expects of its citizens. It is therefore possible that following on from these framings that the state and some non-state (mainly CSOs) respondents advocated for a morally conservative SHE. This contradicted the more comprehensive public health approach envisioned by non-state (mainly international) actors which they deemed to be of sufficient quality for youths. In as much as policymakers may be accountable to both citizens and its funders, balancing such competing discourses can be quite complex especially for countries like Malawi that are dependent on funders, which might come
at a cost for the citizens, though in this case the PEPFAR is in line with the conservative views which stem from a religious point of view.

While abstinence is therefore perceived as most appropriate by Malawi’s standards, those that advocate for adolescents’ use of condoms also recognise the importance of harmonising with the state to ensure that there is no conflicting coordinative communication at policy level, as evidenced by three non-state (male) actors below:

‘Working with this politics of ‘zero condom policy’ in schools is not easy ... at school level they don’t talk about condoms and in programmes outside of school, we encourage students to be made aware of condoms because we feel they ought to know the risks they take. We therefore distribute condoms then [out of school] in order to increase the demand. This does not mean that we encourage them to carry out sexual activities. But then is this sustainable? That’s the question.’

‘Some of us feel that more emphasis should be put on condoms though for others it is just a technical solution as it doesn’t address change of behaviour.’

‘Condom or no condom, they will have a different option. A student needs to be able to make a choice – give them ways of protection. I don’t know how they cope because they start [having sex] really early ... they need to get the knowledge at least early enough because they need to understand the risk.’

The competing discourses shows what a complex space the policy arena is, with actors with competing interests operating and negotiating within it, which is not unusual in SSA as reported by Kaler (2004). Such negotiations then stipulate how non-state actors take an active role while bearing in mind the context they need to operate in while also attempting to ensure that adolescents have access to quality education as well as medical facilities. It is due to this role negotiation that non-state actors are then able to, as part of extra-curricular activities, provide complementary services and information that would not necessarily be accessible in the schools or communities due to conservative approaches to sexuality. The re-articulation and recontextualisation of local historical contestations and politics that emerge through areas such as ‘zero condom’ policy is not unusual where the adoption of education models is not taken for granted and where the interaction between different actors affects the final discourse.

‘But you might think we are in conflict with these other NGOs and their activities outside of school since we have no control there. But we are not in conflict ... before organisations get into our schools they come and get clearance and if they are going to provide condoms in schools, we never allow them to go.’
Clearly, as stated by the (male) MoEST state actor above, this is a delicate space in which both international and state actors have to navigate carefully so as not to compromise each other’s positions. While it could be argued that some actors deploy moral rhetoric around the use of condoms - against the strong recommendations of international actors, based on an understanding that adolescents need to have the option of choice when it comes to risks associated with sexual behaviour, it is also evident that the government is willing to accommodate other actors’ interests in the hope that HIV infections be contained and managed. In order to understand who is involved in developing the curriculum, the next section discusses the consultation and design process.

4.2.2 LS[B]E curriculum actors/contributors

4.2.2.1 LS[B]E syllabus consultation and design process

The overarching Malawi HIV and AIDS policy stipulates programmatic interventions. In order to externalise, reconceptualise and internalise these policies including the Mainstreaming Strategy for the Education Sector, MoEST exclusively state how initiatives ought to take place thereby displaying a very strong coordinative communication while also outlining the specific deliberation, presentation and legitimization of their political idea of LS[B]E.

“Ministries and departments shall ensure the documentation and dissemination of accurate HIV and AIDS information at all levels; integrate and mainstream the HIV and AIDS work and interventions into their core mandate; ensure the protection of key populations and vulnerable groups at risk of HIV infection; and implement sex and sexuality education in their various undertakings.” (GoM, 2012: xx)

HIV and AIDS as a cross-cutting discourse serves not only one set of actors or normative values, but it also tries to persuade others of the necessity and/or appropriateness of LS[B]E, hence the involvement of multi-disciplinary actors (as evidenced in this chapter), reflecting the government’s multi-sectoral approach. Such actors are ones who seek to coordinate policy ideas and discourses which are thus viewed as networks of juxtaposed components, loosely connected and united in ‘epistemic communities’ in the policymaking arena, where normative and cognitive ideas are shared.

As suggested in Chapter Two, powerful actors have greater control in influencing the
shape of any curriculum. Eagleton (1991) illustrates this ideological process wherein the ‘master’ ideas and values of a dominant group are legitimated and promoted in society thereby providing a ‘vision’ of where polity is, where it is going, and where it ought to go. While there are various policymakers involved, the discursive interaction at this level may appear to be either top down or bottom up due to the fact that policy elites generate ideas from different policy sectors which they then communicate to, i.e., education, health, etc. The composition of who such actors should be was defined in the Malawi Education Bill (2012, p. xx) which states:

“...such a committee shall consist of members as may be appointed by a local government authority from time to time. A chairperson of the committee shall be elected from among its members at the first meeting of the committee; an officer appointed as secretary of the committee shall attend all meetings of the committee but shall not be entitled to vote.”

Governments (whether willingly or not) play a major part in education through the provision of infrastructure including teacher training, resources and materials, and it is therefore not surprising to note that the Malawi Education Act also plays a major role here in determining the composition of such a committee. It is not unusual in simple polities such as Malawi, where the country has shifted through different political phases (colonialism; one-party-system; and democracy) that for the majority of the time, governing activities have traditionally been channeled through a single authority. The Act further stipulates that such a committee must comprise of subject leads based on the broad areas which emerge during the needs assessment (Section 4.2.1 above).

‘The Ministry [MoEST] decided to harmonise the work of these organisations [sectors], and we have formed what is known as the National Steering Committee and it tackles on all those [HIV prevention] issues.’

‘We [MIE] consult with various stakeholders in education, the religious leaders, the local leaders, teachers, policymakers, politicians, learners ... we consult those people and then they give us views on what they would want to see in the curriculum... so we invite other people, maybe like the university, MANEB, the Ministry of Education itself, the colleges, the subject experts.’

‘We involve others like the Ministry of Education officials, teachers, Reserve Bank of Malawi, basically statutory corporations that are relevant. We consult the society, different stakeholders from the society and those give us guidance as to what are the things that the society would like to have.’

The cross-sectoral approach evidenced confirmed through the state actors’ statements
above emphasise a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) to education. Malawi’s SWAp was initiated as a response to the demands of changes to international aid in the 1990s. A study conducted by Chirwa (2012) on power dynamics within the education sector however, indicated power imbalances between state and non-state actors with regard to compliance with the partnership model prescribed in the Paris Declaration. In her study, Chirwa (2012) highlights how the state still influences how other (non-state) actors are manipulated into embracing state agendas, thereby constraining how much influence other actors can have on policy decision making processes. Successful discourses can also be manipulative, may distort facts if not invent them, or may be ‘happy talk’ or ‘spin’ to obscure elite domination and power.

Suffice to say, MoEST finds itself in what Schimmelfenning (2001) calls ‘rhetorical entrapment and normative enticement’ where actors do not regard each other as equals and are not open to changing their understanding, such that changing these beliefs becomes impossible in the future. While the GoM, through international norms can constrain the behaviour of stages, it does not internalise the norms but nevertheless feels the need to comply with them due to pressures for legitimation, conformity and esteem. Hence, MoEST’s inclusion of different stakeholders through an open process to validate the need for multisectoral working due to LS[B]E’s integrated nature.

‘Because curriculum development is a complicated process, we have to ensure there are people from MIE, MANEB, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, National AIDS Commission, the School Health and Nutrition Department [MoEST], [Ministry of] Health, [Ministry of] Children and Welfare, Chancol, these other NGOs like SAFE.’

The composition outlined above by this state actor respondent was supported by the detailed list of contributors in the LS[B]E curriculum itself. Subsequently, the committee listed in the syllabus comprised: the MoEST representative (chair of the Committee); a MIE curriculum specialist (secretary); at least two practising teachers (selected through DIAS inspection); a MANEB representative (as they set the exams); and subject specialists (from the university and specialist services like MRA, MBTS) (see Appendix 17). Interestingly, the direct beneficiaries of LS[B]E - young people and parents – were notable by their absence from this committee.

Kirby (2007) and UNESCO et al. (2018) argue that including young people in developing curriculum may encourage their engagement and enhance their views of themselves as
agents of their own change, thereby making the curriculum more meaningful. This resonates with the embodied habitus which can then be viewed as a complex internalised core from which everyday experiences emanate, with choice being at the heart, though these choices are limited, as they are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints the individuals may find themselves in. Suffice to say, students remain an essential contributor in constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving curriculum. The GoM, through its officials, felt that the involvement of young people to develop such a curriculum was not necessary as stated by the (male) state actor below.

‘As the ones in charge, we are in a better place to design this curriculum for them as some of us have been in the field much longer than the students whom we are developing the curriculum for. Children do not know what they want whereas we have a better idea of what we want to achieve and how we can turn this into a teaching and learning subject’.

The GoM while being consultative, asserts itself as the ‘leader’ in developing what is deemed as appropriate curriculum, and contradicts itself through background ideational and foreground discursive ideas of seeing its representatives as the ‘ones in a better place to design’. At the same time, the GoM denies young people’s sexual activities which disconnects it from the knowledge of which areas are worth paying attention to in order for the curriculum to be meaningful to young people. Such forms of governance are not unusual where practices and calculated strategies for implementing specific policies are implicitly reinforced, thereby agreeing with Foucault’s (2000) suggestion of the impossibility to escape from the ideational domination of the powerful. McNay (2000) translates this as a place where the implications within the field produce nuanced understandings of power relations and political agency.

Similarly, parents, though not listed as contributors in Malawi’s LSE syllabus, also have a vested interest in their children’s education and have presuppositions and ideas about what they want their children to learn in school. The home is indeed acknowledged as the place where children’s normative understandings develop, and it could also be the place where reticence begins to develop around SH. The LSE syllabus only refers to the role of the home in students’ lives as below:
“Pupils’ experiences in the home, school and the community should be used as much as possible in the teaching and learning process.” (MIE, 2004a, p. vi)

It is worth acknowledging and acting on such connections, and by being silent about their involvement in the curriculum development process, the MoEST is sending out their ideas through a top-down coordinative communication process. It was claimed by state actors that parents participated in LSE development through the PTAs in various schools, although visible evidence confirming their participation is lacking as they are excluded from the contributing committee members listed in the syllabus. Such omissions could be construed to exacerbate tensions between parents and schools, especially where there may be some familial resistance and/or withdrawal. In a study on CSE in Ghana, Kenya, Peru and Guatemala conducted by Keogh et al. (2018), it was reported that the implementation of CSE was hindered by the lack of an enabling environment as well as by having no links between the school and the home environment, which resonated with Panchaud et al.’s (2019) earlier findings. Similarly, state actors acknowledged the challenges of not including parents in the development process as outlined below:

‘We have had incidences where parents withdraw their children from school because they believe that the education system is teaching their children wrong things. Other parents think that the education is taking the children away from their traditional values so there is a balancing act that needs to happen and including them in these syllabus construction discussions is important.’

The relationship between society – and by extension, the home – and the curriculum could therefore be viewed as reciprocal as it is both shaped by social norms and values, as well as having the potential to reshape, or preserve, those same values and the social conditions which facilitated them. According to De Coninck (2008), the curriculum, more than ever before, is now viewed as being at the centre of daily life and the responsibility of society as a whole, hence the need to demonstrate effective uptake as families can also hinder how a curriculum is perceived. To counter the risk of familial resistance and conflict, more visible parental and student consultation processes are likely to be important.

The Malawi Education Bill further stipulates that smaller sub-committees assigned to specific topics should be formed during curriculum reform, simplifying what may be a complex process as this allows for the tasks to be broken down into manageable ones.
The sub-committees met every two months over a period of two years and sent draft sections of content to the TWG\textsuperscript{17} for further comments. As a specialist group made up of subject experts, the TWG edited, ratified and finally agreed upon the content list. The Curriculum Committee had to ensure that the curriculum was not overloaded, and that members’ inputs were considered and where appropriate, included.

The inclusion of experts in curriculum development should also be carefully thought through as expertise in a subject area does not necessarily equate to expertise in curriculum development. As stated by Connelly, He and Phillion (2008), expert-dominated curricula can only be implemented by experts and not by the teachers who would have limited subject expertise. The gap between what the curriculum intends to do and how it is done at classroom level has been known since Dewey’s work on the “vague relationship to actual teaching and learning practices” (cited in Cohen and Spillane, 1992). A typical disconnection between curriculum development and implementation in the Malawi context was for instance, evident in time allocation. The government at ministerial level operates a coordinative discourse by recommending the timetable, despite it being the head-teachers at school level who are most affected by it, as they have to make decisions due to subject teacher availability. This puts the inclusion of LSE in the school curriculum at risk.

‘DIAS is responsible for the allocation of time. It’s that department in liaison with curriculum development centre … this is done through the release of a circular indicating the number of periods per week and the recommended periods for LS[E], as a core subject, would be 40 minutes twice a week for junior secondary.’

The government, as stated by the state actor above, continues to exercise its power, through both the coordinative and communicative discourses, over what can and cannot be done and by whom. As much as there is an admission of the liberty exercised in letting schools decide which subjects and recommended periods are, the structural problems in each school limit the amount of flexibility the schools may have over what they can indeed control. It could therefore be concluded that there seems to be disconnection between what schools are expected to teach in allocated time, and what

\textsuperscript{17} A technical working group is an ad hoc group of experts on a particular topic who work together on specific goals. These meetings are often meant to encourage stakeholders to discuss the state of research on a topic and/or to identify gaps in research.
they can actually achieve, given their time and resource constraints.

Though teachers are generally not considered ‘subject experts’ for the purposes of curriculum development, MoEST included them in the development of LSE while also acknowledging the difficulty in selecting them. As asserted by Voogt, Pieters and Handelzats (2016), the processes for involving teachers are usually unclear due to the multiple roles they are expected to play, i.e., that of design, training peers, and implementation. MoEST through its policies stresses the importance of “the involvement of learners and teachers in planning and implementation of activities to create an opportunity for information sharing and innovation [...] through anti-AIDS clubs, essay competitions, participatory dance and drama, engagement of student unions, etc.” (MoEST, 2014, p. 26). Nevertheless, data on a clearly defined approach to include teachers in Malawi curriculum development is scanty if not non-existent, as admitted by state respondents.

‘As part of the Committee, we also involve the [head-]teachers because we [MoEST] know this is important for them to foster that spirit of encouraging the teachers teach in this new area. We work with them to make sure that the implementation on the ground goes to plan.’

‘It’s not easy to choose teachers to be part of the process so sometimes we [MoEST] look at inspection reports to look at those that have performed well during inspection, and we use those rather than TUM (Teachers Union of Malawi) as they don’t have any way of knowing the best teachers as they don’t conduct inspections... we can identify the best teachers. We ensure there are two practising teachers on the panel.’

Including highly skilled teachers emphasises that the curriculum development will be expert-dominated, since the teachers who will be included will be those who are considered best performers. In essence, this further alienates the curriculum from those teachers who are not as highly skilled as those involved in the development process. Respondents additionally admitted that the limited number of teacher respondents was affected by how many could realistically be included whilst ensuring there was a balance within the selected committee. As much as the inspection reports are used to select teachers, the inspections themselves are not necessarily focused on LSE teaching directly. As LSE has brought a radical pedagogical shift from traditional authoritative pedagogies to facilitative learner-centred ones, the inclusion of such teachers could therefore be perceived as unrepresentative of this shift, since the teachers involved may not necessarily be involved in teaching LSE directly. It could therefore be concluded that
teachers’ inputs ultimately facilitate legitimising MoEST’s background ideas of what constitutes acceptable pedagogies.

‘While developing the curriculum, it occurred to me that we were expecting these teachers to adapt without allowing them time to learn these new ways of teaching and then I said, no, we need to think through this process and not just about the curriculum itself because we may design a good curriculum but if the teachers reject it, then we are back to square one.’

While state and non-state respondents convey unified coordinative communication through their background and foreground ideas of what ought to be done and how, they are also representing individual interests, stemming from their institutional structures, as well their own personal values from which agency may be exercised. While this signifies actors are not necessarily hindered from practicing their agency during the development phase, it is also clear that the (ministerial and institutional) structures within which they operate, may possibly constrain to what extent they can influence the shape of the curriculum. Habitus, while embodied and inscribed in individual’s body, is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions, i.e., people’s relationships to dominant cultures are conveyed in a range of activities, including how they act, speak or gesture (Bourdieu, 1984). Inevitably, the actors here are reproducing the social conditions of their own production in unpredictable ways. It is evidently clear that while Malawi strives to be a democratic society (firstly through its shift into a multiparty system), the citizen participation is still very much a thing that is aspired. Through their deliberate communicative discourse, the normative ideas of what acceptable behaviour still comes out strong via the conservative values, which are held strongly. Here it is clear that the main idea is to ensure that further HIV infections are halted, i.e., the solution to the problem.

The response here also signifies how Malawi as a country is responding to what is a global phenomenon, where common values are shared, though convergences of ideas and practices across the national contexts would still be shaped by the societal values. For instance, the strong conservative SRHE perception that is held in Malawi, evident through some respondents in the study above, means that they do not simply hold the views from other contexts, hence the need to stress is has to be relevant for Malawi. The consultation process while aiming to be consultative and participatory, is also the way the state legitimizes what is acceptable behaviour of its citizens, i.e., a way of practicing power and control through the coordinative and deliberative communication
using the background and foreground ideas.

At the same time, the development process does also consider teacher agency (resonating with Priestley et al., 2012), which would clearly have an impact on how the developed curriculum is enacted at classroom level. As clearly evidenced above by the non-state actor’s statement, rather than take the normative approach that teachers will have to work with what is developed, they rightly question the appropriateness of pedagogies within the coordinative ideational discourse. It is therefore not surprising, as Apple (2014) points out, that decisions about how teachers ought to teach are usually made without them, thereby diminishing their power to influence what are considered appropriate or approved pedagogies.

Such exclusion deskills teachers while at the same time they are being upskilled in the sense that whatever teaching methodology which is decided upon comes with expectations of them to acquire new skills, for instance on new evaluation methods. Assumptions of teacher effectiveness and natural adaptation should therefore not be made when introducing new curricula. Teachers are important agents of change (Priestley et al., 2015), though very often, they may also be seen as potential obstacles to this change due to their continued adherence to outdated forms of instruction, i.e., didactic teaching, which is exacerbated by planning issues as indicated below by a state actor:

‘We needed to also think of how the teachers were going to manage this new way of teaching and learning in order for them to move from the didactic teaching and allow students to question some of the reasons.’

It is not unusual for teachers to revert to didactic ways of teaching when they feel deskilled and/or seen as recipients of a curriculum (rather than as designers who will implement it). Smith (2008) argues that teachers’ voices are usually silenced and/or unsolicited during policy formulation, implying that local knowledge might be underplayed, discounted, or simply ignored. As such, there is a danger that policy-driven pedagogical shifts in which teachers themselves had no part to play, might cause teachers to feel overwhelmed. They may feel, for instance, that they are losing control of students and might therefore revert to old authoritative pedagogies. A study conducted in South Africa (as reported by Ramparsad, 2000) concluded that teachers were indeed powerless to influence and participate in curriculum development, as they
were not considered by others as being adequately qualified and lacked the necessary skills to participate.

While the state may be under pressure from a more educated and vociferous public that may be demanding input, Pinar (1988) warns however that having such a wide range of actors with different perspectives involved, i.e., traditionalists and liberalists, may well bring significant implications which lead to conflict and contradiction. Different actors, for instance, may lobby for specific values and interests. Such disagreements, while important, are rarely documented in policy documents.

4.3 LS[B]E at programme level

4.3.1 Formulation of LS[B]E aims and objectives

Major shifts in educational learning goals have been highlighted recently by Care et al., (2018) with more emphasis placed on curricular reforms promoted by global discussion of changing work and societal needs. SDG4.7 focuses on the 21st Century Skills (21CS) relating to global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, which recognises the need for education systems to equip learners with competencies, among others, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, cognitive and learning; socio-emotional; and behavioural learning (UNDP, 2019). The identification of objectives therefore has implications for how curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is to be developed. It is the education system’s goals that are then deconstructed into learning objectives as they lay out expectations of what students will know.

Historical approaches to understanding skills development have been used in the past including Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956), later updated by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), which became one of the common approaches to organising educational objectives. The three taxonomies/cognitive domains (i.e., knowledge, skills, and affective) have heavily influenced teaching and learning objectives as they are used at different times depending on which student outcomes are expected, as the levels of attainment increase in complexity over time. The approach is associated with concepts of learning progressions at development stages rather than with a gradual and progressive acquisition of increasingly sophisticated competencies. The formulation of the Malawian LSE syllabus objectives in 2003 involved a six-member National Steering Committee.
The progression concept is used to provide guidelines for teachers and students in order to understand learning processes of particular domains through the identification of specific appropriate competencies and reasonable aspirations for students. The main goal for LSE in Malawi can be broken down into several more specific objectives set around the following areas (and outcomes) as outlined in the syllabus document (MIE, 2011) through the table below:

**Table 12: LSE objective areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LSE objective area and outcome</th>
<th>What is expected of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Students will be able to develop their self-awareness and self-esteem to achieve their personal potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth and development</td>
<td>Students will be able to appreciate how growth and development affect their behaviour and interpersonal relationships, and acquire the skills needed to deal with the challenges of growing up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health promotion</td>
<td>Students will be able to make informed decisions about their personal health and demonstrate health-seeking behaviour in the community and wider environment, with particular attention to hygiene, sanitation, and prevalent diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and moral development</td>
<td>Students will be able to live and interact socially and morally as members of a family, group, community and nation, in accordance with gender and disability equity, and individual rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and sexuality</td>
<td>Students will be able to acknowledge their value as sexual beings and appreciate their sexuality, by making informed choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship and the world of work</td>
<td>Students will be able to demonstrate how to access the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed for socio-economic and occupational development in the society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MIE, 2011*

As observed in the table above, it can be deduced that LSE’s objectives are thus based on behaviours and skills which are meant to equip students with the ability to cope with the various challenges they may face. While respondents indicated that they were
merely ‘led’ (as there were no set rules to follow from the outset) into the process of objective formulation, they were also guided by the National HIV and AIDS Policy (2011-2016).

‘You will have noticed that the rationale of LS[E] is developed by consulting the various documents including the HIV policy and what the education aims for LS[E] are.’

The admissions by non-state respondents about how the formulation of LSE’s objectives uses these policies confirms how the state, through its policies, can govern its citizens. One could infer that this resonates with Bourdieu’s habitus where he sees human activity as neither constituted nor constitutive but rather both simultaneously, as human beings act “following the intuitions of a logic of practice” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 11). LSE’s objectives, as outlined above, focus on developmental outcomes of teaching, learning and assessment as depicted below in Figure 3.

*Figure 3: LSE curriculum objectives*

The above objectives are a confirmation of what is stipulated in the policies guiding HIV and AIDS initiatives, which have been translated into what is expected of the students and teachers. Figure 3 above clearly indicates the importance of teachers’ roles in leading students in attaining the behavioural objectives which have been set, emphasising how the curriculum has shifted to an outcomes-based model where emphasis is put on the...
student. The developmental outcomes, which are the overarching principles guiding how objectives ought to be set, are derived from various documents and/or frameworks including Malawi’s Constitution, the then MDGs, NESP, EFA, Malawi’s Education Act, global policies and multilateral agreements to which Malawi is a signatory. Therefore, secondary education outcomes, though focusing mainly on essential skills, address the following areas: citizenship; ethical and socio-cultural; economic development and environmental management; occupational and entrepreneurial; practical; creativity and resourcefulness; and scientific and technological (see Appendix 16 for more details).

Such broad objectives, however, imply generalisability without specifying measurable objectives that should be achieved once students have learnt and been formally assessed and examined. Popham (1972, p. 33) stresses that “the educational evaluator should encourage the use of instructional objectives which provide explicit descriptions of the post-instruction behaviour desired of learners”. However, others would argue that important intrinsic behaviours such as aesthetic appreciation for instance, cannot be measured and yet are very important and should be included in curriculum objectives. In order for the Malawian students to be able to show their attainment of the specific learning outcomes, it is important to ensure that such behavioural objectives are clearly defined. Based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy of educational objectives, measurable outcomes that require higher levels of expertise will require more sophisticated assessment techniques and as such, the objectives ought to be set based on the specific knowledge, skills and affective goals for that specific level.

Popham’s (1972) interpretation of how behavioural objectives ought to be unambiguously declared, in order to provide explicit descriptions of behaviours expected after learning has taken place, therefore resonate with how Malawi’s LSE objectives have been shaped. LSE’s objectives have been developed around knowledge, skills and attitudinal understandings which both occur at different times and sometimes simultaneously. Balancing the different knowledge, skills and attitudes expected is a challenging task in developing Malawi’s LSE objectives. Respondents described how challenging a task it was while also balancing between facts, concepts and values.

‘The content basically focuses on knowledge. What is HIV, etc. But, by doing that, it’s like you are encouraging people to just learn by rote, by memorising things and then throwing them out. But that’s not really what is supposed to be the case. You are supposed to provide more detailed information.’
The reservations raised by the non-state actor above emphasise the importance of Bloom’s Revised taxonomy which generally moves away from rote learning and is used to describe the degree to which students ought to acquire the right knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, it is also important to acknowledge that terminology of specific facts has to be learnt as it is due to biological facts, in this case. Governments at the same time have recognised the role they have to play, through policies and curriculum statements, as part of their accountability to its citizens. As observed in Section 4.2 above, while the multi-stakeholder working might increase efficiency, it may also obstruct communications among the group thereby contributing towards the non-alignment of the philosophy that they may be working towards. It is therefore not surprising to see how the different philosophical stances of the various actors frame what they expect to see in the objectives and how they expect to see content selected and organised.

4.3.2 Content selection and organisation

If the curriculum is to be a plan for learning, its content and learning experiences need to be organised so that they serve the set objectives. The Malawi Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Framework states that there are “six organisational design features which are underpinned by a moral and philosophical foundation which are: breadth; balance; relevance; integration; progression; and differentiation” (MoEST and MIE, 2015, p. 14). As such the core and broad objectives that were developed at the time were linked to the developmental outcomes (as presented in Section 4.3.1 above) to guide in the scope and sequence of the LS[B]E content and organisation of teaching and learning experiences.

LSE, the subject through which LS[B]E (as a subtopic of health promotion) is implemented, is also about general knowledge and other skills students need to acquire cognitive abilities. It has been observed by Pinar (2012) and supported by Stenhouse (2012) that content organisation is mainly concerned with addressing the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of content while striking an appropriate balance of depth, breadth, knowledge/skills and processes and values. Selecting what knowledge must/should/could be included to enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes is challenging as many pathways could conceivably be taken. Thus, the organisation of such learning experiences and content requires understanding its
significance within the wider curriculum, i.e., how essential/basic is it.

Bloom, Madaus and Hastings (1971) however argue that behavioural objectives, like those of LSE, can only serve as individual interpretations, in that the words which refer to those inner states are acceptable as general statements of intent, but then have to be broken down into performative behaviours. Bloom, Madaus and Hastings (ibid, p. 33-4) further highlight “… thus while ‘understands’, ‘appreciates’, ‘learns’ and the like are perfectly good words that can be used in an initial, general statement of an objective, they should be further clarified by the use of active or operational verbs that are not open to mis-interpretation”, suggesting that the actual language used in the set objectives should aid teachers to help students achieve the set objectives.

Notwithstanding the link to objectives, the relevance (social implications and values), validity (accuracy and how it relates to expected outcomes), and feasibility (how easy it is to learn concepts within a specified timeframe) of content are all clearly of importance here. Apple (2004) suggests emphasising that topics are bounded and finite, and therefore do not necessarily have to include everything. It is therefore not surprising that the content selection for LS[B]E could not have been an easy task due to its cross-curricular shape.

‘So, they said in this subject, we’ll not just look at issues of HIV and AIDS, but we’ll also look at other issues which affect our youth. So […] they took also on board […] violence and delinquency; conflicts; […] gender […] morals and values […] If your morals are not good enough, you are most likely to end up with the HIV and AIDS. And maybe through poor relationships, again that can take you to HIV and AIDS. So, we look at as many areas as possible that are linked to HIV and AIDS and were packaged together as LS.’

This state actor respondent clearly understands the complexity of HIV and AIDS as a cross-curricular topic linked with other areas. Such broad views of content selection are not unusual as Slattery (2013) points out that proponents of a curriculum argue for the richness of different ideological positions and disciplines, and for a student-centred approach (among others). It is therefore not surprising that the LS[B]E curriculum then encompasses a wider content element that is cross-cutting. Slattery (ibid) further states that opponents on the other hand argue that an integrated curriculum trivialises other areas/skills. Other non-state respondents agreed that the general nature of the subject affects how topics are selected.
‘The problem with LS is that it is too general and too broad to define which means some areas can easily get overlooked. We [the committee] thought of different skills and at times these were not even common so you can only imagine how difficult that would turn out to be. Others simply started from a Christian point of view and in their opinions, it was about ‘right, no sex for those not married so simple skill is to help them abstain’ and some of us felt different about this.’

‘… for LS, it’s like a kitchen sink where everybody wants to throw in everything […] overloaded […] it has to carry gender, disaster risk reduction, climate change […] Everyone thinks of LS as the entry point so it becomes too overloaded and finally it will lose completely its direction.’

Such differing views between actors on content are also an important part of the curriculum development process as they highlight whose values then matter the most through the curriculum itself. Kirby (2007) acknowledges that these processes are complex due to the need to balance the different knowledge in various disciplines where horizontal and vertical knowledge that cuts across several subjects and areas of student’s life should be applicable, e.g., SRH knowledge acquired from both Biology and LS[B]E.

While the topics may not have immediately appeared at symposium stage, the Committee reached a consensus through an elimination process of the many topics that had initially been put on the table.

‘… they isolate the topics for which they have … the general or broad topics which they think should be there. These are the ‘core elements’ like for example they would say ‘we want our learners to learn about growth and development’ or ‘health promotion’ or ‘sex and sexuality’. It is a broad and core element. Once they have got the broad topics, they ask themselves to say by the end of the education cycle say from Form 1 to Form 4, what is it that they should achieve.’

The acknowledgement by the state actor above indicates an assertion that such elimination processes may help to narrow down content and ensure that that which is selected embodies appropriate relevance and feasibility in order for outcomes to be accomplished, in line with the Malawi Curriculum Framework as stated above. While this process is necessary, it implicates the silencing of some topics over others as only the voices of those involved in the process can feed into the topics. While Dewey’s (1915) analogy of curriculum as a road map for content selection is often ignored, Foucault’s
(1972) suggested thinking about content like grids of specification that encompass the official curriculum of human knowledge and human subjects, and its divisions and categories, is the one mostly used, as in the Malawi case above. It is these grids, that reflect core or broad topics, that help in building taxonomic and categorical systems that are then used for those skills and knowledge that may not fit elsewhere.

As Deng and Luke (2008) point out, it is not unusual to start with a long list which is then whittled down. Content selection generally starts with the core curriculum areas, for example, the subject and key learning areas. These are then filled in with essential skills, processes and content while responding to the appropriate age/grade/developmental stage as stated by respondents.

‘When we meet, we discuss what the main policy wants to achieve through its objectives. Then ... we look at the problems that these youth are likely to face in order to choose which skills they need to be able to deal with these [problems]. We ... consider these alongside the developmental and skills objectives in terms of what is expected of the students. Then we develop the learning objectives which will have been developed from the categories that we work with.’

This emphasis highlighted by the state actor above on ensuring that the content is indeed relevant and achievable is obvious above and it matches with what the curriculum framework states. In a way, similar to the ‘whittling down’ approach described by Deng and Luke (ibid) above, LS[8]E curriculum developers adopted a rationale depicted in the diagram below.

*Figure 4: Rationale of LSE content at Symposium level*
In essence, this shows that in order to start thinking of appropriate content, the identification of what skills are required for LSE is an essential starting point for relevance. This then links to what the developmental and life skills outcomes are, so that the rationale behind the specific core and broad elements are then reached. The diagram above is similar to Taba’s (1962) model of curriculum development which moves through the following stages: a diagnosis of needs, the formulation of the objectives, selecting and organising the content, selecting and organising the learning experiences and finally the evaluation. In a way, this shows that LSE as a curriculum started with a Tylerian model; however, the involvement of teachers in the process also lends itself to the Taba model.

The LSE syllabus further states that its main goal is to:

“develop students who can integrate their knowledge, feelings, attitudes, values and skills to live their lives to their full potential. Furthermore, LSE provides students with the opportunity to develop skills and motivation to function efficiently and effectively in society.” (MoEST and MIE, 2015, p. xi)

The expectation here is that students would be equipped with appropriate skills to deal with life’s challenges. It is therefore not surprising that the GoM felt it was appropriate to develop content around the student needs of specific skills as outlined in Section 2.7.1 above (MoEST and MIE, ibid; GoM, 2012). LSE therefore ended up adopting the
six main areas as outlined in Section 4.3.1 above. In borrowing Greenwood’s (2013) framing, it could therefore be safe to state that Malawi’s LSE selection and content organisation and educational experiences in this case depends on cross-curricular integration. Cross-curricular integration bridges the content of different subject areas and contents, as illustrated by the scope and sequence of health promotion (which HIV and AIDS fall into), show in the table below:

**Table 13: Health promotion scope and sequence for junior secondary school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core element</th>
<th>Form 1 Topics and sub-topics</th>
<th>Form 2 Topics and sub-topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>promotion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene and sanitation</td>
<td>• Good habits of personal hygiene</td>
<td>Blood donation and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Correct and consistent use and care</td>
<td>• Groups of people who can donate blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proper disposal of refuse</td>
<td>• What to do after donating blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy lifestyles</td>
<td>• Lifestyles that promote healthy living</td>
<td>• Benefits of blood donation to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Importance of eating nutritious foods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultural practices that promote unhealthy eating habits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ways of promoting healthy living</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health services (different types of health services; importance of accessing health services; importance of regular medical check-up; importance of proper use of prescribed drugs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood donation</td>
<td>• Importance of blood donation</td>
<td>STIs including HIV and AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsibilities of a blood donor</td>
<td>• Modes of transmission of STIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Characteristics of a blood donor</td>
<td>• Prevention of STIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)</td>
<td>• Meaning of the term STI</td>
<td>• Groups of people who are vulnerable to HIV and AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Types of STIs</td>
<td>• Ways of caring for people living with HIV and AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• General signs and symptoms of STIs</td>
<td>• Importance of good nutrition to people living with HIV and AIDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skills required for preventing contracting STIs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic facts about HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>• Difference between HIV and AIDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Modes of transmission of HIV infections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• General symptoms shown by one suffering from AIDS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Life skills for resisting contracting HIV infection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MoEST & MIE, 2015*

While HIV and AIDS appear more prominently under health promotion with the
dominance of HIV prevention as opposed to mitigation, in comparison to the remaining five main areas, they are not always explicitly addressed despite being referred to as a cross-cutting issue. For instance, under the sex and sexuality topic (whose subtopics are: sex, sexuality and gender; components of sexuality; sources of information on sex and sexuality; sexual harassment and abuse; factors that influence sexuality; and effects of sexuality and behaviour), there is no reference to how, for example, sexual harassment and abuse can exacerbate HIV infections. Notably missing from the list is also reference to PLWHA, as some students may possibly be living with the virus. As such, it would appear as if HIV and AIDS have been allocated less time in comparison to other topics and/or subtopics. Several reports (UNFPA, 2018; UNAIDS, 2015) have argued, however, that more attention and time should indeed be allocated within a curriculum for complex issues such as HIV and AIDS. A review of SRH education conducted by UNESCO and UNFPA (2012) of East and Southern Africa for instance, concluded that sexuality, STI and HIV risk needed to be allocated more time and space in the curriculum to make it more meaningful, rather than to make it look like an add-on topic.

It is therefore not surprising that a study conducted by Kalanda (2010) on Malawian LSE implementation, showed among other issues, a lack of attention given to teaching it in comparison to other examined subjects (as LSE only became an examinable subject later in 2010). Nevertheless, as discussed in Section 4.2 above, decisions about timetables are made at division level and schools have to work with them on the ground. The daily timetable has seven 40-minute periods of lessons starting at 7:30am and ending at 13:30pm with class assembly and two 15-minute breaks in-between. Each core/mandatory subject is allocated two periods per week, unlike optional electives which are allocated a single period each.

Over the years, Malawi’s LSE’s classification has shifted between a core and optional subject. At the time of data collection, LSE was a core subject. Operationalising LSE as a core subject comes with challenges, including that of timetable overload – a characteristic concern given the context of a hierarchy of subjects. Overloaded curricula come with the risk of underperformance as this may undermine teachers’ ability to meet subjects’ objectives. Often new subjects are brought in without consideration of the demands of such changes. While it is essential to reform curricula from time to time, it is crucially relevant to consider whether poorly-resourced and poorly-staffed schools (whose teachers are often over-worked as they tend to teach more subjects than they
should) are able to absorb such changes.

‘As an additional subject it meant the already over-loaded curriculum was now
given an extra subject which teachers had to adapt with on the same timetable
to make it work.’

‘By making LS[E] into a stand-alone subject, some of us felt there was still this
problem of now overloading the curriculum because this now became an
added – an additional subject on the time-table which teachers are already
struggling with ... this is not helpful.’

The different concerns raised by both state and non-state respondents above highlight
the disconnections between what could potentially be agreed at curriculum
development level and what in reality would be feasible. The main concern raised here
is the ability of the teachers to cope with yet another additional subject on top of having
to manage large class sizes with multi-age students. Since teachers’ performance is
attached to how students perform in exams, teachers are less likely to focus on subjects
that are not formally assessed, meaning the ones classified as optional will have less
attention paid to them.

‘...we also had to be careful with what we were asking for as making LS[E] into
a core meant having a minimum amount [number] of periods in the week to
teach it ... so, are we facilitating our teachers to do their jobs well or we are
making them fail?’

‘LS[E] was meant to have three periods a week but there were problems of
overloading the timetable since we already had subjects like English and
Chichewa which were already split into twos, so you have language and
literature which meant there was a lot of pressure on other subjects. As LS[E] is
core, it now has two periods a week.’

As stated by state actors above, it is interesting to note that while the actors are
attempting at providing a policy solution, they are equally concerned about how at
programme level their coordinative solutions would be realistically achieved. Decisions
about how much time to allocate to a specific subject on the timetable are often
affected in implementation as the ones developing the specific subjects are not
necessarily the ones on the ground implementing them. Nevertheless, these could be
interpreted as paradigms that reflect the underlying assumptions or organising
principles orienting policy.
4.4 National and local level: how LS[B]E will be taught and assessed

4.4.1 Organisation of teaching and learning experiences

HIV is a complex and dynamic issue which is continuously evolving, similar to how curriculum theory also revolves (Priestley et al., 2015), and this dynamism needs to be reflected upon and responded to in terms of how LS[B]E needs to be taught and learnt (Kirby, Laris and Rolleri, 2007). Curriculum reforms are generally associated with radical shifts in pedagogical styles thereby shifting the role of the teacher and students. The introductory statement in the LSE syllabus confirms how teaching and learning ought to be organised:

“A variety of activities to be done by learners are included in the form of role plays, debates, field visits, group work, case studies and assignments to ensure that teaching and learning are learner-centred.” (MIE, 2004a, p. iv).

The above quote demonstrates how the GoM uses coordinative communication to direct how LSE (including LS[B]E) ought to be taught while allowing room for manoeuvre within the stipulated activities. Pre-set curricula such as LS[B]E can be interpreted as prescriptive and are usually associated with being ambitious with an emphasis on objectives, and are therefore possibly hard to achieve. Ellis (2004) points out that such curricula state what ‘ought’ to happen through formulated plans (‘how’). However, while Malawi’s LS[B]E syllabus could be easily interpreted as ‘pre-set’ due to its prescribed ways of teaching and learning, the syllabus also shows (as evidenced in Chapter Five below) how LS[B]E has moved beyond this prescriptiveness to being more responsive in terms of how things are in the real classroom, and being more ambitious, thereby disrupting the traditional model. An example of this is the use of ‘recommended’ in suggestions of pedagogical methods.

Traditionally, Malawian teachers were more attuned to didactic ways of teaching where they would be the ones in authority. The current pedagogy recommendations therefore shifts the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator engaging with learners (i.e., in contrast to the traditional authoritative role) with the aim of enabling learners to be responsible and autonomous, actively involved in a democratic environment, and engaged in interactive learner-centred activities and approaches. Based on their study of the South African curriculum, Harley and Parker (1999) state that this sort of shift changes the position of teachers who have strong attachments to specific subjects through the
creation of new recognition rules which create unfamiliar ground for both teachers and students.

As evidenced above, Malawi’s LS[B]E curriculum could be interpreted as having adopted a modernist approach (linking subject more with life, placing emphasis on skill building, life skills and values) and moving away from the traditional model paradigm (of teachers as the knowledge dispenser, of chalk and talk methods with more emphasis on exams). Such a shift signifies a rejection of the belief that the world is an objective place whose truths can be known. A modernist approach takes the curriculum as a social, political and cultural phenomenon and therefore, it should be objectively developed as the structures of a qualitative world rather than seeing the world as a ‘one size fits all’.

Such pedagogical shifts coupled with how a subject is hierarchically classified (as core/elective – see Section 4.3.2 above) bring complexities to time allocation thereby affecting how teaching and learning experiences are organized. As observed by Apple (2004), time is a major factor in determining the scope of content and the balance between breadth and depth, as teaching and learning has to be done within bounded timetable and topics have to be covered within a specific period of time.

However, the ordering of school subjects into hierarchies of importance is an inherent part of the curricula: certain knowledge - usually Mathematics, Biology, Physics, etc. - is accorded higher status. This has the effect however, of undermining subjects usually associated with concrete and practical experience; these tend to be accorded relatively lower status. This resonates with the discussion by Bleazby (2015) on how such categorisation contributes to social inequality within mainstream schooling where only a number of subjects can be offered based on the teachers available, through the hierarchy of cognitive application of knowledge. This ‘lower status knowledge’ can be seen as failing to stimulate ‘higher-order’ thinking skills, and as it is viewed as being explicitly values based, is therefore more exposed to criticism. In the case of LS[B]E in Malawi, as seen in Table 13 above on health promotion, there are fewer skills-based topics and rather a lot of factually oriented topics which require recalling information rather than higher-order thinking. For instance, state respondents emphasised the importance of having the topic of ‘self-awareness’ first on the list.
'The main emphasis is on the student and to make them aware of themselves before they can learn these other skills, so it was imperative to start with such a topic in order for them to move on to the other topics.'

Despite the state respondents’ intention of sequencing learning and teaching experiences on a gradual basis, the majority of non-state respondents disagreed with the order of sequencing as they did not see it as essential. This, nevertheless, shows an application of soft sequencing principles. The ordering of the teaching and learning experiences can generally be construed in terms of dominant ideologies, available discourses, disciplinary and knowledge paradigms or cultural narratives and values rather than hierarchies as conventionally understood (Pinar, 2001; Slattery, 2013). Modernist curriculum approaches tend to eschew hierarchies’ characteristic of top-down sequencing, thereby downplaying the ‘whose knowledge counts’ element often associated with curriculum reforms. Such non-hierarchical ordering and sequencing allow teachers to move from one topic to the next, including to more advanced concepts, without having to wait until a concept is fully understood. Despite a lack of topical hierarchy in the Malawi LSE curriculum, all respondents agreed that particular starting points were at times necessary as some of the concepts were perceived impossible to understand without any prior information.

4.4.2 Organisation of LS[B]E assessment methods

The 21CS has brought with it, as reported by Care et al. (2018), a shift for the education sector from the summative function of assessment where tests were the norm for capturing a student’s acquisition of content and ability to demonstrate this, to the more formative type of assessment where it has been extended (Kauley and McMillan, 2010), to guide teachers and to generate more descriptive information. The 21CS learning goals are explicated in the form of complex competencies and they also present challenges such as identifying specific grade level expectations. It is therefore essential to have a balance between the differing approaches and the up-to-date scientific knowledge, though it is also hard to determine what a student should know and be able to do in the absence of a long history of teaching and learning these competencies.

In order to ensure proper alignment of LS[B]E’s teaching, learning and assessment methods, committee members had to refer to the framework of objectives presented in Figure 3 above. Birenbaum et. al. (2015) argue that teaching, learning and assessment
should be consistent, comprehensive and continuous while remaining in line with objectives. Respondents indicated that assessments are treated as a reflective exercise to improve the curriculum as reflected by the state actor below:

‘To measure the extent to which aims and objectives of the syllabus have been achieved, i.e., knowledge, skills and abilities ... to check if students have acquired skills and abilities they did not have before ... to check if there has been an improvement in the skills and abilities they already possessed.’

While it is important to assess how a syllabus is doing, it is worth noting that facts are constant in learning and will therefore remain the same though to some extent the only difference may well be the dichotomisation of the identification of true/false and/or correct/incorrect responses. On the other hand, transferable skills are dynamic and fluid and therefore can take many forms. With curricula like LS[B]E that aim to equip students with specific skills thereby demanding different learning domains, it is therefore essential that the set skills are adaptable as they are context- and situational-specific. Similarly, different subjects will demand different instructional approaches. In other words, the assessment methods that are used in Maths would not be the same ones used in Biology or in LS[B]E. It is therefore important to look at the LS[B]E-specific assessment methods in the next section.

4.4.2.1 LS[B]E Assessment Methods

As reported by Kishindo (2011) and MoEST and MIE (2015) the monitoring of the implementation of LSE, including formal assessments, (though only agreed in 2010) was crucial as teachers had been prioritising subjects that were to be formally assessed – this was despite the fact that LSE had been rolled out across all schools since 2004. Over the last 20 years, there has been a push towards the developmental continua (learning progressions) to the extent that they are being used as guidelines for teachers specifically in domain and competency levels (Care et al., 2018). As Popham (2008) points out, setting the assessment standards requires careful thinking about what and how much can be achieved in what time, thereby allowing a gradual build-up of the specific skill or competency.

The process of deciding upon assessment standards is not straightforward as each objective has to be broken down into elements; it needs to be possible to demonstrate if these have been met or not.
‘They will take a core element and ask what was its outcome? [...] There’s the assessment standard which is like a general objective. Assessment standard is broader than the success criteria. Success criteria are more specific of what things that learners are supposed to be doing [...] the assessment standard is broken down into specifics which are the success criteria which are either medium- and long-term goals to be achieved at different stages.’

The state respondent’s explanation above indicates their view that students are expected to acquire the objectives as a series of goals, which are broken down into manageable standards. This resonates with Popham’s (2008, p. 83) understanding of learning progression as being “a carefully sequenced set of building blocks that students must master en route to mastering a more distant curricular aim”. Such an approach facilitates students to acquire lower-level skills before moving on to complex skills; this is similar to Bloom’s revised taxonomy which proposes a system that would begin with lower thinking skills and gradually move up to higher order thinking skills.

In addition to providing guidance to teachers, assessments provide students with feedback on how they are doing in that specific subject. Reviewing how syllabus objectives are to be met (topic by topic) is key to developing a good assessment method. By breaking down these elements, it becomes clear that the application of various assessment and examination methods should be determined by the level of achievement expected of students. While standards and curricula are prioritised in curriculum documentation, it is the students’ progress towards meeting the set standards and goals that is important. It is therefore necessary to identify the behaviours that specifically indicate differing levels and skills, so teachers can review whether they have been acquired or not.

The assessment methods for LS[B]E are therefore a combination of formal and summative methods through formalised tests (at the end of every term) and examinations (at the end of every year), in addition to continuous assessments. Care et al. (2018) argue that generic ability cannot be measured directly and thus only reinforces traditional formats associated with rote learning. It is for this reason that they argue for alternative constructs such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication etc. to be used to try and capture the acquisition. The tests and examinations which are formal and conventional (and require recalling information) range from: question and answer (also known colloquially as paper and pencil)
examinations; multiple-choice questions; short answers; and essays as indicated by
state actor below.

‘Tests are written forms of assessment normally done throughout a term to
check on the progress of students. They also help the teachers to continuously
evaluate themselves and their students ... continuous assessments... then we
have exams which are the written form of testing and these are usually done at
the end of the term and have more details with more time allocated to these.’

The use of such varied assessment methods has often been associated with modernist
education (Pinar, 2010; World Bank, 2008; 2015) and with shifting the role of a teacher
to that of a facilitator thereby encouraging students to learn through exploration and
discovery. Having varied types of assessment also helps cater for students with different
learning abilities, as the different domains of psychomotor, affective and cognitive each
require a different indicator. While multiple-choice questions help in testing knowledge
comprehension and critical application, they have also been criticised by proponents
of assessment reform (Frisbie and Waltman, 1992; Stanger-Hall, 2012) for their
restricting effect on curriculum and teaching methods in that they encourage teachers
to focus on test-taking skills at the expense of helping students develop meta-cognitive
skills and the practical understandings. Care et al. (2018, p. 20) further support this
argument stating that such assessment methods “do not capture the processes that
underlie the complex skillsets, which need to be stimulated and elicited, modelled and
demonstrated, and applied to novel situations”. Short answer questions help test
knowledge and comprehension, whereas the essay questions help in analysing writing,
synthesis and knowledge. Below are examples from a variety of LS(B)E assessment
methods:
### Table 14: LS[B]E Assessment Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Example Question and Marks</th>
<th>Expected Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Explain 5 ways in which the youth can manage stress and anxiety. (10 marks)</td>
<td>The student is expected to give a point each and explain how each point helps in stress management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short answer</td>
<td>Mention any two life skills that one can use to avoid HIV and AIDS.</td>
<td>The student is expected to give two specific skills which have been covered in class which then encourages the students to recall information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple-choice Questions</td>
<td>Which of the following groups of people are at a high risk of contracting HIV?</td>
<td>For this one the correct answer is C because this group usually has multiple sexual partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A. Widows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Orphans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Prostitutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. The aged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author*

Each LSE examination encompasses the methods illustrated above while Table 15 below presents an example of how Malawi’s LSE syllabus outcomes are to be achieved and how teachers are expected gauge the learners’ acquisition.
Table 15: Health promotion teaching, learning and assessment syllabus for Forms 1 & 2

Outcome: Students will be able to make informed decisions about their personal health and demonstrate health-seeking behaviour in the community and wider environment, with particular attention to hygiene, sanitation and prevalent diseases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment standard</th>
<th>Success criteria</th>
<th>Theme/topic</th>
<th>Suggested teaching and learning activities</th>
<th>Suggested teaching, learning and assessment methods</th>
<th>Suggested teaching and learning resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We will know this when the students are able to:</td>
<td>Students must be able to:</td>
<td>Basic facts about HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>Brainstorming the difference between HIV and AIDS; Discussing the difference between HIV and AIDS;</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Observation checklists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explain the difference between HIV and AIDS;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify modes of transmission of HIV infection;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>Raised diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the general signs and symptoms of AIDS;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer assessment</td>
<td>Sign language symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify life skills required to resist contracting HIV infection;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer assessment</td>
<td>Braille materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss life skills required to live positively with HIV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Role plays</td>
<td>Resource persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students' experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MoEST & MIE, 2013
In comparing the assessment methods presented in Table 14 and the syllabus for health promotion in Table 13 above, there are similarities in how they are attempting to tighten the assessment methods and how the various methods are to be applied. For instance, in the success criteria outlined in Table 14, there is a strong steer towards cognitive learning outcomes highlighted here (which focus on the basic and adequate knowledge), though Winkel (2004) indicates that the three domains of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective are assessed all at once on the expectation that one gets the right knowledge, attitude and skills to apply. Equally, Naezer, Rommes and Jansen (2017) argue that such education could then be seen as the transference of a standardized basic set of ‘adequate’ knowledge, skills and attitudes that students should attain. For example: in the cognitive domain, students are expected to be able to ‘identify modes of transmission of HIV infection – for example multiple choice questions in Table 14 above; with less emphasis in the affective domain where students could demonstrate their ability to think, organize, solve problems through the ‘identification of life skills required to resist contracting HIV infection’ as a way to strengthen the essay question in Table 14 above. The psychomotor domain is the one that is challenging to assess at classroom level as is focuses on specific behaviours. Students cannot practice sexual behaviour in a group or classroom though opportunities could be make in reference to certain skills such as issues of consent, how to respect boundaries and wishes of others, or whether to decide to use contraceptives, etc., which teachers can then emphasise more on.

Additionally, a variety of different types of assessment questions may be better able to facilitate different learners’ abilities as some may be more able or comfortable with essays while others are more comfortable with multiple-choice. It is additionally asserted by Pinar (2007) that when various methods are used to broaden assessments, teachers are also encouraged to make corresponding changes to their teaching approaches.

‘A good test is one that has a mixture of questions that would demand different attributes from the candidates in terms of skills and content. The different demands of items are better because they allow students of different abilities to attempt the questions.’

The acceptance of multiple assessment methods by the state actor above acknowledges
how coordinative they have been in their communication, to ensure that they are also in line with the transnational policy which encourages multiple uses of assessment. The assessment gains authenticity through the use of varied methods as indicators within the different dimensions. An implication of this is how those students who give innovative responses are then rewarded, given that the use of formalised examinations which are based on specific set criteria.

The structural and environmental factors which affect how the curriculum is implemented—for example the school timetable or teacher ability—could limit the extent to which multiple assessment methods could realistically be applied at any given time. For instance, continuous assessment in the classroom can be considered time consuming amidst such tight timetables and over-crowded classrooms. However, there are elements of behaviour relevant to value-based curricula such as LS[8]E that are subjective and therefore cannot be measured through the passing of an exam. The lack of join-up between teaching and assessment here has at times been criticised as non-state actor states below:

‘Most of the times chief examiners reports indicated that most students were getting better marks when questions required them to recall or remember information other than applying knowledge gained in class...as such one of the recommendations would be that school based tests should include items that require students to apply knowledge and other higher order levels .... The ... teachers to teach in a way that students understand the content by interpreting the objectives in the syllabus accurately. So that instruction and assessment talk to each other.’

Criticisms of the applicability of the assessments came more strongly from non-state actors than their state actor counterparts who believed the suggested assessment methods were enough. This resonates with the assertion by Brooks et al. (2013) that there has been limited attention given to understanding whether and how students actually use learning outcomes. The importance of making assessments tighter so that students can demonstrate they understand the concepts in a more meaningful way, specifically related to behaviour, remains an area of contestation between the different actors. Constructivist education is associated with students discovering what they are learning through application. Additionally, it is also concerned with 'high order thinking' which pushes students to go beyond recalling information and asking why a specific skill is necessary and why it should be applied.
‘Just because the students are passing well in this subject, we should not relax and think they have got the right information. Some of them find recalling this information easy to do but applying it is a problem. This is where the teaching and assessment needs to tighten up so as to ensure that when the students are writing these exams, they are indeed recalling information which they have understood and can apply properly.’

The above response from a non-state (international) actor highlights that education systems should not be complacent just because students are able to achieve good exam results, as this is not necessarily an indication that they have acquired the cognitive skills necessary for them to engage in healthy sexual behaviour. Behavioural objectives are concerned with observable and measurable changes in student behaviour, e.g., how a student thinks, acts or feels at the end of a learning experience.

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter Four sought to understand how LS[B]E ideas through transnational, national and local policies are externalised, reconceptualised and internalised through the coordinative discourse (among policy actors) and communicative discourse (between policy actors and the public). With HIV and AIDS being a global health problem, there has been a global call for a unified response in order to halt the spread of further HIV transmissions and AIDS deaths. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable shift in educational goals which are calling for students to be equipped with a broad range of skills hence curricular reforms to adapt to the 21CS education goals. Using the research question ‘what are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning and assessment?’, this chapter therefore analysed the LS[B]E curriculum development process, including who the actors are, and how they select content, teaching, learning and assessment methods.

While Malawi is a signatory to some transnational frameworks like SDGs, EFA, UNGASS et al., there is pressure for it as a country to try and live up to certain educational standards in order for it to be recognised as having met these. Using the CT and structure and agency analytical levels of macro/policy; micro/curriculum; and enacted curriculum, this study has shown curriculum development processes are complex,
where the interests of different groups have to be managed while attempts are made to include everybody’s voices. Using their coordinative discourse with other actors, the MoEST prescribe, through their various official documents, who is to be included and how they ought to contribute. The non-state actors, while they might have an influencing power and represent their individual institutions, are obliged to work with MoEST to develop the curriculum’s ideational discourses. It is through these dialogues that MoEST and other actors legitimise what LS[B]E curriculum should look like, and how it should be organised, taught, and assessed.

Specifically, the chapter shows the interplay and contestations between the state and non-state actors in terms of what was included in the curriculum and how the content was organised, as well as selecting what teaching and learning methods were appropriate. While the chapter has indicated who was involved, it also notes the absence of parents and learners in the development process. Recognising the role agency plays, in both reproducing and transforming power (as curriculum outcomes) makes the process of parent, teacher and learner engagement in curriculum development processes a complex and challenging one, given that social, cultural and religious forces can equally shape the curriculum one way or the other.

The LS[B]E curriculum is to a great extent influenced by the social norms and values of Malawi as a society. At the programme level, as observed above, the values behind LS[B]E discourses stem from a moral type of education thereby signifying a conservative angle through its content. As outlined in the chapter, it is a given fact that there is some form of control (of certain sexual behaviours like pre-marital sex; and population growth) which is communicated through the curriculum. It is not surprising that in a Christian nation which was colonised by the British, youth sexual behaviour is considered to be unacceptable. Hence the attempt to control how they behave through the curriculum itself as a form of social reproduction. In this case, the structure determines what is to be taught and how, and when, while also being influenced to a large extent, by the dominant culture; thereby reproducing a specific type of agency. While none of these (i.e., culture, structure and agency) may not be directly causational nor hierarchical to each other, they each have a role to play in influencing how the policy mutates between the different actors. It is clear in this case that education does not necessarily include equal opportunities, but rather mechanisms for perpetuating social
inequalities. This affirms Giddens’ structuration and Bourdieu’s habitus which suggest not only that structure and discourse are determinants of curriculum but that curriculum may also be the malleable outcome of agency, through alternative circumstances and dispositions.
CHAPTER 5: LS[B]E CURRICULUM ENACTMENT AND EXPERIENCE AT THE CLASSROOM LEVEL

5.1 Introduction

As observed in Chapter Four, the LS[B]E curriculum standards are characterised by a close alignment between the purpose, content and knowledge requirements. It is this emphasis and pressure to focus on learning outcomes in relation to classroom practice that is of interest in this chapter. Moreover, as Anderson-Levitt (2016) notes, when ideas enter local arenas, meanings are remade to adapt to the cultural, social and historical context of a local nation and to national and local power relations. According to Chirwa and Naidoo (2014) the classroom, through teaching and learning, is a site which is influenced by social and structural contextual factors. Pedagogy, according to Alexander (2008, p. 927), “encompasses both the act of teaching and its contingent theories and debates” thereby allowing certain constraints and possibilities where the teacher chooses which methods to use and which resources to employ.

Teachers have a determining role in the success or failure of a reform as some might be inclined to block or adapt some of the content and subvert the more modern principles of the curriculum, especially where new pedagogies are promoted, e.g., shifting from didactic teaching to learner-centred teaching. The roles of teachers as change-agents and cognitive sense-makers are situated within complex webs of systemic social interactions. Teachers’ experiences of gender equity also have implications for teachers as they implement the curriculum, in terms of whether they treat male and female students within the sameness and difference discourses. Klein, Ortman and Friedman (2002, p. 4) believe that gender equity through curriculum brings "fair and just" to all genders "to show preference to neither and concern for both" (Klein, Ortman, and Friedman, ibid, p. 4). Additionally, Lorber (2012, p. 4) states that “attention to ways that women and men, boys and girls are not homogenous groups but crosscut by cultures, religions, racial identities ethnicities, social classes, sexualities and other major statuses”, bring to the fore how intricate and opaque gender can be. As such, diversity and inclusivity need to be embraced while acknowledging that gender is a multilayered ethical, moral and social construct (Simmonds, 2013). Henderson (2010) and Pinar (2007) see curriculum as a part of social transformation and therefore a complicated conversation. Despite teachers’ roles in mediating HIV preventative interventions, curriculum theorisation under such complex contexts has not received much attention.
(Musingarabwi and Blignaut, 2015). In addition to the complexities they face, teachers’ attitudinal dispositions (i.e., an individual teacher’s personal and intersubjective interpretation (meaning-making) and response to the syllabus’ conceptual demands in specific contexts) can cause a syllabus to either achieve its objectives or fail. Teachers’ efforts in effecting purposeful mediations of LS[B]E are therefore affected by personal and contextual factors as well as by societal norms, i.e., through their own beliefs and pedagogic content knowledge and how they use instructional tools including textbooks; and how they engage with students and manage the classroom.

By addressing the second research sub-question, this analysis enhances my understanding of the interplay of a myriad of factors both endogenous and exogenous to teachers, which shape and frame individual teachers’ responses to LS[B]E curriculum policy. The analysis sheds light on how the LS[B]E syllabus is enacted through complex interplays between choices, actions and repertoires which are influenced by contextual sources of information, and in the light of this, draws attention to how different teachers implement LS[B]E at classroom level. According to a research study conducted by Lauridsen (2003) on teachers’ perceptions of the curriculum development process, teachers usually understand and implement curriculum relative to their own subjective interpretations and understandings of what is expected of them. In addition, students are subjected to the curriculum that is taught to them and as such their experiences are equally important. The data presented is therefore drawn mainly from classroom observations, individual teacher and student interviews, and FGDs with students.

Using classroom (lesson) tasks as units of analysis, the data will enable an exploration of how LS[B]E ideas are locally translated and selected by real people in the selected two classrooms. The tasks took the form of a sequence of lessons framed by a cohesive theme/topic whose norms of assessment were formulated in the curriculum’s shape and pedagogy. According to Doyle (1992) the lessons, which are authored by teachers, are embedded within larger organisational and societal structures that must be considered. As reported by den Brok (2001), lessons are understood as communicated ‘texts’ which are interpreted and acted upon by the students, who become co-authors through their contributions and responses to the texts. It is through these classroom discourses that the communicative system emerges in relation to a specific combination of teacher and students talk while being constrained by space and time. In addition, the
analysis also draws on Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2012) indicators (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in order to understand the enquiry methodologies for students’ acquisition of LS[B]E. Specifically, this chapter is presented as follows: students’ socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds (5.2); teachers’ own beliefs and values (5.3); how teachers use their teaching and learning resources, including how they engage with students and manage the classroom (5.4); classroom discourses and patterns of communication including how students experience LS[B]E (5.5); and concluding remarks (5.6).

5.2 Students’ lives and socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds

Forms 1 and 2 comprised of a total of 126 students (i.e., 24 girls and 45 boys in Form 1; and 21 girls and 36 boys in Form 2), who mainly came from the surrounding areas and predominantly from the Chewa tribe, hence attending Mchenga school. All students confirmed they belonged to a specific church, confirming their Christianity, i.e., Presbyterians, Anglicans, Protestants, Moslems, Catholics, etc. their places of worship included: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, i.e. The majority of the students lived with their parents and siblings, whereas a small number lived with their grandparents. The average size of the households being 6 (including parents) and mostly in peri-urban dwelling. In comparison to the general poverty levels in the area where the school is, the students seem to be well off based on the data (see Chapter 4). While this shows that a majority of the students come from households where their parents were salaried workers, gender roles were naturally adopted with the females mainly working as nannies, vegetable / egg / mandasi (fritters) sellers, house cook; whereas the males took more manual jobs, such as security guards, gardeners, drivers.

Interestingly, the students’ aspirations appeared to be shaped by patriarchal paradigms which strongly define the assumed gender roles of either male or female, where men are the main providers and women are home makers. For instance, girls aspired to professionally work as nurses, bank tellers, teachers, secretaries; whereas boys aspired professional jobs such as headmaster, accountants, business leaders, doctors, engineers, scientists, politicians, police officers, farmers, priests and journalists. Even though not all students were able to have frank conversations with their families on SRHE (more detail in section 5.5 below), they still perceived a healthy lifestyle, including
avoiding STIs like HIV and AIDS, along with the knowledge and skills gained from school, as a means to a good career enabling a higher social status.

5.3 Teachers’ own beliefs and values

As observed in Chapter Four above, curriculum reforms often come with innovative and interactive teaching and learning methods. However, the implementation of such new methods is affected by contextual factors, including teacher’s own beliefs and values which can create barriers. Pajares (1992) asserts that belief is relatively constant with the main formative factors being family, education, culture, society, reflection and life experience, as well as the process of socialisation. Teachers as ‘change agents’ are able to enable students to participate, cooperate and believe in themselves so long as they understand that each student is different and therefore should be supported appropriately (Xu, 2012). It is through these teacher beliefs that Österholm (2009) and Borg (2001) believe every teacher shows their own objective and subjective knowledge. Teachers’ beliefs also influence how they plan lessons, make decisions and implement new ideas. Thus, teaching anything that is contrary to their own beliefs is often considered misleading (Pajares, 1992). Some teachers believe that discipline and good exams results are the most important factors though by contrast, Mansour (2009) believes that students should be treated as discoverers of their own knowledge and therefore learn through exploration, whilst being responsible for their own learning process through cooperation with teachers and other students. It is in the context of these distinctions that the section below focuses on factors influencing teachers’ own beliefs and values.

A teacher’s expressed beliefs and values of their understanding of gender equity in classrooms can also impact on how a teacher teaches. According to Martinek (1981), teachers exhibit preferential treatment, either consciously or not, toward certain students as a result of certain expectations of the teacher. Gender interactions, while not a main focus of this study, were also important to understand, both from a teacher’s and student’s perspectives. Even though the classrooms observed only involved male teachers (see Chapter Three above), it was still interesting to see whether or not the said teachers did offer preferential treatment towards any of the students. Both Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa accepted the traditional gender socialization though they still believed their interactions with students were equitable.
“Gender is well-balanced in the sense that everybody is aware of this but the victim mainly is based on girls you know... but the weak minds is the female side... so, that’s the problem.” Mr Kadzuwa

“Yeah, so that is another factor that contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS that is what we call ‘gender imbalance’. So, because men are so dominant too, they can dominate women to do whatever the man wants. So, the woman has less power... is forced by this man to ... be together without using what, condoms. Because the man is dominating, has all powers.” Mr Chanza

Both teachers acknowledge that gender imbalance is to some extent problematic, both in and out of school. And while they generally agree that there are equitable gender interactions in the classrooms, both Mr Kadzuwa and Mr Chanza subconsciously reinforce the gender imbalances by referring to girls as ‘victims’, ‘weak’ and having ‘less power over men’ and men as ‘dominant’. It can be deduced from this that the teachers’ espoused theories of gender may possibly contradict their own implementation of the LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level, especially what they expect to see from male and female students at skill level and behaviours.

In regard to the inclusion of gender within the LS[B]E curriculum itself, it was also interesting to note how the headteacher interpreted it.

“In the curriculum the gender aspects are not well-represented because, mostly the curriculum points at women as the people who usually transmit HIV but in actual sense its not only the women. The men are in the fore front. They are the ones who move around and about especially when a man knows that I am HIV+, that one will make sure the goes and infects many more. Sometimes the women when they realise their position, they might slow down. Women are caring. Women are loving but men mmm, they are careless people, too careless and they are jealous people. They want to kill others, to spread and infect many so that they go many.” Headteacher

While this study was not focusing on the textbooks themselves, the above assertion also calls for future exploration into how information is perceived from a gender equity perspective at classroom level as this would equally have an impact on classroom interactions.
5.3.1 Professional identities of Mr Chanza (Form 1 Teacher) and Mr Kadzuwa (Form 2 Teacher)

It is asserted by Spillane and Hopkins (2013) and Coburn (2001) that how teachers come to understand and enact instructional policy is influenced by prior knowledge, the social context in which they live and work, social and gender norms, and the nature of their connections to the policy or reform message. Pajares (1992) further adds that teachers’ beliefs are inextricably linked to their decision making and therefore to their professional practice. How they see themselves as teachers, based on their interpretations of continuing interaction with the wider context in which they operate, manifested through knowledge, job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and change in motivation level, is crucial for the successful implementation of any curriculum. A teacher’s identity is reinforced through their beliefs, dispositions and interests in relation to teaching, and their conditions of work. What a teacher feels about their own school will have an impact on the quality of their teaching, how they perceive and interact with students, consequently affecting student learning outcomes.

Mr Chanza is one of the three teachers that teach LSE at Mchenga Secondary School. He was by default selected as one of my participants as he teaches Form 1 students. Other than the MIITEP teacher training Mr Chanza received (outlined in Chapter Three), he was inspired to teach by his parents who instilled in him the need to help others. His own self-image and self-esteem emerge from his experience of practising as a teacher for over eight years. His hope is to teach Bible Knowledge as a subject in the future. He indicates that although he is ‘quiet’, he finds teaching a joy.

Like Mr Chanza above, Mr Kadzuwa is the second LSE teacher who teaches in Form 2. In addition to the MUSTER teacher training Mr Kadzuwa has received, he also has a degree in Human Resource Development. His 13-year teaching career has seen him move back and forth from junior to senior teaching posts which he has found to be demotivating at times (especially when moving from leadership positions in schools back to being a teacher).

Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa’s teaching experience varies in that one has limited teaching experience whereas one has more experience at secondary level. These factors influence how they see themselves play the role of teacher – mainly as a facilitator which is contrary to what the curriculum developers expect of LS[B]E teachers. Xu (2012)
argues that teachers who are confident about their professionalism are better placed to make it their own personal responsibility to ensure students learn and grow, whereas those who do not believe in themselves are unable to organise themselves, do not expect good exam results and are often unable to solve discipline problems at classroom level. Both teachers are also responsible for other subjects; this is not necessarily unexpected as that is how they have been traditionally prepared to teach.

Both teachers operate in an environment where societal expectations weigh heavily on them, in that they feel it is their responsibility to ensure that parents are happy with the education their children receive. In a study on teaching sexuality education in Zambia, Zulu et al. (2019) reported findings of parental reticence towards some components of sexuality education which they considered to be sacred and therefore better addressed through traditional counsellors. As a result of ongoing parental resistance in some parts, Goldman (2008) reports that it is therefore not surprising that many parents and teachers prefer teaching about abstinence. Similarly, Pattman (2005) and Pattman and Chege (2003) also argue that LS[B]E is, in some cases, taught as a series of moral injunctions against premarital sex which stifles adolescents’ further exploration. Additionally, Ryan (2001) who conducted a study of teachers’ practices on Life Orientation in South Africa argues that teachers actively promote abstinence, and for LS[B]E to be taught within a moral context where teachers attempt to join moral perspectives with biological information. However, there are other opposing views reported by Santelli et al. (2017) and The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (2017) who conclude in their review that such abstinence-only education not only fails to protect adolescents, but also violates their human rights.

Mr Chanza’s training in theology and his intention to teach Bible Knowledge influenced his understanding of sexuality and thus, the way he understands and implements LS[B]E. Mr Kadzuwa, while acknowledging adolescents’ sexual behaviour, still condemns it. It is through his self-identity as a senior teacher with considerable experience and ability to teach another subject that he feels he has enough content and pedagogic knowledge to implement LS[B]E. And while he shows some willingness to adapt, his religious perspectives suggest that it is the deeply ingrained, socially constructed beliefs and values he holds which ultimately affect how he understands and implements LS[B]E. It could however be argued that positive change can be mobilised and reinforced through
compelling feedback which forcefully disrupts pre-existing beliefs in one’s capabilities. As pointed out by Ratsatsi (2005), if a teacher feels that syllabus content contradicts their personal beliefs, they adapt by either radically altering the content or dropping it altogether. Though Ratsatsi (ibid) further argues that as part of teacher preparation, they should be empowered to realise they can responsibly and professionally get around curriculum prescriptions, for instance, by varying the content of a sequence, or emphasising particular values or issues, this is an area that is subjective to the teacher who can then choose to adapt or not.

Mr Chanza shows an awareness of understanding the teaching shift from a teacher-centred approach to a child-centred approach. He indicates he has attended special LSE training in order to differentiate the old ways of teaching from the new. Malawi’s LSE encourages cross-curricular learning thereby recognising multiple viewpoints and seeking to build a more knowledgeable, lasting and transferable understanding of the world. Mr Chanza shows an awareness of the importance of integrating information from other subjects like Biology while also providing accurate information and allowing students to explore or ask questions, etc. Though he acknowledges that Biology and LS[B]E are two different subjects, he is aware of their linkages.

‘… they are related because in Biology students learn about childbirth or child development and that this happens as a result of sexual intercourse and in LS[B]E we extend that process in that in the same way you get pregnant, you also get HIV. So, the interlinks are there.’

One interpretation of Mr Chanza’s quote above however, could imply that he wishes to support students’ views with facts arguably forcing him to revert to the old didactic ways of teaching. The importance of his demonstrating distinctions between the epidemiology and social transmission aspects of HIV and AIDS would be key in how he transmits this information in a learner-centred approach. I would argue that such distinctions are crucial when teaching similar subjects and it is important for teachers to demonstrate these differences clearly; this can only be enabled through their own understandings of such differences. A systematic review of school-based HIV education in LMICs reported by Fonner et al. (2014) confirmed the importance of effective teacher training which prepares them for such distinctions. Mr Chanza further notes that there are differences in teaching styles between Biology and LS[B]E as he believes Biology is
more factual whereas LS[B]E is cross-curricular through its linkages with other subjects like social studies. The need for adaptation in the LSE subject encourages teachers to have knowledge in more than one discipline as it helps them to be able to relate to other relevant areas when teaching subjects like LS[B]E.

While both teachers have different backgrounds and teacher training, they share a common moral perception that adolescents should not be sexually active hence their lack of acceptance and acknowledgement of such behaviour by adolescents. Before analysing how the teachers handle such conflicted understandings and perceptions between their personal values and what is expected of them as part of the curricula, it is equally important to understand what each of the teachers’ content knowledge is and how they adapt this in the classroom. The next section discusses both teachers’ individual understandings of sex and sexuality.

5.3.2 Mr Chanza’s understanding of sex and sexuality

Mr Chanza believes that his Christian background enables his LS[B]E teaching.

‘My own Christian background has guided me to be where I am as well as what I believe in. Sex is therefore for married couples only and not these youths. I would like to promote the lives of Malawians especially students as they are windows of tomorrow, so they need to take in the facts only.’

Mr Chanza’s strong moral beliefs influence what he expects students to learn hence his emphasis on who should have sex and the kind of information students should be entitled to as he refers to ‘... facts only’. Mr Chanza therefore sees himself as one who restores the moral order and therefore as a ‘counsellor’ who facilitates the ‘good behaviour’ of these students. This supports Helleve et al.’s (2009) study in South Africa on teacher cultural perceptions, in which they report that teachers see their role as one of restoring lost moral values. It can be concluded therefore that Mr Chanza’s belief naturally stems from his strong Christian background and how he sees himself balancing multiple personal and professional roles in and around school. Balancing personal and professional roles however, can cause contradictory expectations to emerge, i.e., personal or societal expectations may vehemently deny adolescents’ sexuality while the curriculum itself on the other hand may accept adolescent sexuality through the promotion of preventative measures, or encourage ‘safe sex’ as part of positive
relationships. As observed in Chapter Four above, there is a split between what some actors may wish the curriculum to encompass and the more conservative moral approach which other actors strongly support. As observed here with Mr Chanza, this can present a clash between a teacher’s personal identity and beliefs, and what they are expected to teach as part of syllabus implementation.

5.3.3 Mr Kadzuwa’s understanding of sex and sexuality

Mr Kadzuwa is fully aware of the threat HIV and AIDS presents to Malawi as a nation.

‘HIV is a problem in many areas... we are losing very productive people, very intelligent people, those people who can develop the community, nation or the whole country... such people who can effectively put the country on good track.’

Mr Kadzuwa’s interpretation of the importance of LS[B]E, and his regard of it as an essential subject, is linked to his association of it with the economy of the country. Such connections are not new. Freire (1994) emphasized that in a capitalist society, everything, including education, is seen to be in service of production and for the good of the economy. Mr Kadzuwa feels it is his moral duty to ensure that students are not confused in the face of a deluge of information in the media, in addition to an absence of frank discussions within families about sexuality. Students indicated a lack of SHE frank discussions with their parents, which is similar to study findings by Dilorio, Pluhar and Belcher (2003) on parent-child communication about sexuality. The study findings confirmed some of the students did not feel comfortable discussing such issues with their families.

‘I do not discuss sex with my parents ... they’re not educated and ‘sex’ is a taboo topic for them. I know that I’m the one who can educate them on HIV and AIDS but because we can’t talk about it, I just leave it.’ Student005: 16yo Female

‘I do not talk about this at all with my siblings or my parents at home. I don’t think I’m allowed to talk about these things at home.’ Student001: 14yo Female

‘There are some parents who are old fashioned that they believe that discussing issues of sex and relationships is a taboo. So, they do not talk about it. Even me I cannot ask them because that is how I was brought up. They see it as taboo. In their culture it is not right to ask about sensitive issues with a child.’ Student027: 15yo Male
Mr Kadzuwa believes that it is this lack of frank familial discussions that leads to common misconceptions which promote risky practices and ineffectual safety measures. Such misconceptions are perceived to be more prevalent in rural areas where there is limited access to the media and other resources. A Ghanaian study conducted by Asamoah et al. (2017) on HIV and AIDS knowledge showed that those in urban areas were less likely to endorse myths than their rural counterparts, despite having access to the same extensive knowledge of how HIV is transmitted.

While schools are trusted to deliver precise LS[BE] knowledge, FGD discussions revealed that students expected more detailed information, as they felt that:

‘teachers are not explicit and sometimes they deliberately skip certain issues for fear of broaching sexual issues’ (Boys’ FGD)

‘… sometimes it feels like the teachers do not want to teach us in some areas, especially where there is a sexual discussion … but they are our teachers and they need to tell us so that we don’t go and find out about this information elsewhere.’ (Girls’ FGD)

In addition, the Girls’ FGD also agreed that families as sources of information need to improve their parent-children interaction at home especially on issues of sex and relationships, so that they can bring links between school and home knowledge.’ (Girls’ FGD)

While students agreed on the connections between school and home knowledge, they pointed out that parents were not necessarily willing to discuss SHE with their children.

‘Not all information from parents and other family members is correct. Some information is not correct especially information regarding some cultural practices which are harmful to young people.’ (Boys’ FGD)

‘At home when you are listening to the radio in the presence of parents and all of a sudden the topic on the radio changes to something to do with sex and relationships, parents tune in to a different radio station to prevent you from listening to sensitive issues.’ (Girls’ FGD)

While the study did not involve parents to explore their perceptions, a different study
on experiences of parents discussing sexuality topics with adolescents in Ghana, Baku et al. (2018) reported that while the parents faced some level of discomfort and difficulties with terminologies, they still discussed sex issues with their adolescents (especially girls) as a preventative tool against irresponsible sexual behaviours. But while adolescents’ sexual activity remains unacceptable in parents’/elders’ eyes, data shows high rates of teenage pregnancies as discussed in Chapter Two above. The teachers in the study also acknowledged their awareness of premarital sexual activity though it was clear this was not something they were not going to accepts as a norm.

Mr Kadzuwa’s perception of adolescents’ sexual activity did not change his stance regarding what he perceived to be appropriate knowledge and skills through the education system.

‘... the youth are doing sex almost every day because they are saying condom will protect them from pregnancies and contracting STIs and HIV and AIDS. So, in my aspect, I’d just say ‘no condoms’.

Mr Kadzuwa’s views nearly adolescent sexual activity and his well-intended aspiration to ensure these adolescents are well-equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills are contradicted by his own moral beliefs where he refuses to allow students information about condoms. Chapter Five indicated that the development of LS[BE] curriculum raises some tensions amidst actors on condom use; therefore, it is not surprising that this stand is hereby taken by Mr Kadzuwa.

‘So because of the emphasis on abstinence other methods of preventing HIV and AIDS such as condom use are not thoroughly taught in class yet some of us engage in sex because we cannot manage to abstain. We do not know how to use condoms properly because we are not adequately taught.’ (Boys’ FGD)

The opposing student’s intervention demonstrates a counter-discursive position held by them, thereby presenting potential contradictions inherent in relating what is the authorised HIV knowledge to experiential and local knowledge. Such students may well have insights into their experiential knowledge related to the topic, as an ‘expert patient’ (e.g., Sanderson and Angouri, 2013). This means, the students may have more insights into the challenges that are faced using such practices. But rather than explore this further, the teacher goes back to what ‘should’ (legitimately) be done to prevent
HIV transmission. This then makes the student to appear awkward, thus the reproduction of the social asymmetries in this institutional context are reflected “in what is left unsaid, interrupted, cut-off or de-emphasised” (Waitzkin, 1991, p. 40). It is therefore not surprising that in the classroom context, though the teachers may engage the students’ knowledge, the teachers are still not only “an authority” in the topic, but also “in authority” of what can and cannot be discussed thereby regulating the classroom discourse (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001, p. 880). As demonstrated in examples above, not only is the teacher in control of the topic, but also of how the students interact. As evidenced above, the teacher demonstrates a liking of didactic talk with questions and answers as a strategy that checks the legitimate knowledge. Consequently, the discussion centers around what is legitimate knowledge and what is the acceptable interaction, which then reinforces the formal hierarchical relation between teachers (as knowledge providers) and students (as recipients of this knowledge). This control therefore implicates students’ enactment of agency since a “critical health literacy” is rarely encouraged (Kreps, 2012, p. 14).

While Mr Kadzuwa demonstrates a clash between his personal beliefs and information he is expected to teach, the students are practising risky behaviour. A study on teachers’ conflicting cultural schemas in Uganda by de Haas and Hutter (2019) found that teachers can feel uncomfortable to teach sexuality education when the content conflicts with their personal beliefs and values. Such cultural beliefs may result in being reticent about safe-sex practices like using condoms as in this case. Mr Kadzuwa’s resistance stems from his own personal beliefs which have been ingrained in him through religion, which he is not necessarily comfortable going against. While he sees himself as a well-respected teacher who gets along with students, he believes it is his responsibility to maintain authoritative control in school. These expectations are not dissimilar to what Mensch, Hewett and Erulkar (2003) found in a Kenyan study of adolescent sexual behaviour in which premarital abstinence, promoted by influential conservative religious groups, is a defining feature of how society expects adolescents to behave. Furthermore, in another study in Kenya reported by Mbugua (2007) on factors inhibiting educated mothers from giving meaningful education to their daughters, it was observed that adolescents tend not to self-report their sexual behaviour due to familial expectations, thereby making the accuracy and reliability of such data doubtful.
As reported by Panahi (2015), there are overlapping spheres (schools, families and communities) which require cooperation between these environments as they interact with each other. In a review conducted by Verhoeven, Poorthuis and Volman (2018), it was reported that the role of teachers does not end within the school environment as it extends beyond the classroom, hence they still expected students to respect and obey them and not to question authority.

‘Students know I do not tolerate nonsense. My secret is that I don’t share jokes with students otherwise you weaken yourself …’

Mr Kadzuwa demonstrates through his statement above that he does not expect students to consider him as a friend but rather as an elder whom adolescents can respect. Indeed, he assumes that through these beliefs of social distancing, and his ideas of and how students ought to behave, he will be in a better position to impart the necessary LS[B]E skills and knowledge.

In addition, Mr Kadzuwa sees his teacher responsibility as alongside being a custodian of the [school] community thereby providing a connection between home and school. As such, he sees his role as one that ensures students grow up respecting elders and therefore listening to their advice, including not engaging in pre-marital sexual activities. He further supports the timely introduction of LS[B]E which, he believes, has helped curb misconceptions in the face of conflicting information.

‘The world is changing technologically at an alarming rate and this is also bringing confusion with the cultural beliefs and as such these young people want to try what they see on television. So, rather than leave them to be confused, we are here to teach them the importance of these things as it’ll help with the development of the country.’

Mr Kadzuwa sees his role as a knowledge holder as more important than the other means by which students would acquire information, for instance through modern technology, which in his interpretation, leaves students confused. I argue here for highlighting the relevance of culture, especially where/when sex education misconceptions are widespread, to make sure that students can relate to both home and school information. For instance, a study of Malawian cultural practices conducted by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) (2014) indicated that parents placed
blame on the media for their children’s sexual behaviour and a lack of respect rather than on their lack of frank discussions with their children. Some of the cultural practices studied in the MHRC study, like polygamy, were indeed found to increase the transmission of HIV, though a study by Gausset (2001) argues that there is no cultural causality between polygamy and [HIV] disease as he believes that a polygamous family in which all partners are faithful is less threatening than a monogamous marriage in the same circumstances. Airhihenbuwa and Webster (2004) agree on complexity of the relationship between culture and disease. However, indeed there are other more traditional surgical and sexual practices which teachers ought to be aware of so that they can help students clearly understand which of these are harmful or not. MHRC (2014) thus recommended that Malawian teachers should address such contradictions and demystify any related misconceptions relating to cultural practices and LS[B]E at school level.

5.3.5 Teacher resources and incentives

In addition to the teachers’ content knowledge, training and teaching and learning materials, the infrastructure (in terms of resources and incentives) also affects how a syllabus is implemented. Both teachers raised their concerns for the need for additional support, especially in subjects they feel less equipped to teach due to their limited knowledge and resources, including supplementary teaching and learning resources as well as illustrative posters. Mr Chanza for instance, finds school accommodation of great importance as an incentive for him to effectively implement the curriculum.

‘I have to walk a long distance from my house to the school as there is no accommodation here. There are only three houses here as you can see and there are many of us [teachers] and because the public transport is not reliable sometimes, it means I am late meaning the students are suffering if I turn up late as it means my period [lesson] is gone.’

Mr Chanza indirectly demonstrates that he does not take responsibility for being late as he interprets this to be the school’s fault for failing to provide accommodation within the school vicinity, rather than his problem to resolve. In a way this disadvantages students who would naturally turn up on time at school only for the lesson not to take place due to the teacher’s absence. Such incentive disconnections are not new in the education sector. As reported in a study conducted by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) in SSA and South Asia on teacher motivation, it was concluded that both intrinsic and
extrinsic factors influence teachers’ motivation levels. While accommodation in schools would be ideal in the eyes of Mr Chanza, and likely of many other teachers in similar situations, this is not usually available due to budget pressures.

Mr Chanza’s disappointment at the lack of accommodation within his own school environment is a hindrance to his abilities to perform as a teacher. His late arrival at school often means he is not always able to cover his first lesson. This problem is to some extent outside his control, i.e., he relies on public transport to get to school. If he lives far from the school, his first lesson on the school timetable is likely to be affected. While policymakers have been asked to identify and improve teacher incentives to improve learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2014), Mr Chanza’s sentiments resonate with a study conducted and reported by Muvunyi (2016) in Rwanda, which confirmed the importance of understanding teacher incentives on the impact of their levels of motivation.

Alongside his enthusiasm for LS[B]E, Mr Kadzuwa on the other hand also harbours a sense of disgruntlement relating to what he sees as poor allocation of resources.

‘The country is spending a lot of money treating these people from HIV. This money could be allocated elsewhere like in this school but because of the expensive treatment, we do not have enough resources [for initiatives such as prevention].’

Mr Kadzuwa’s disappointment concerning resource allocation emphasises how funding for HIV interventions is understood through its allocation (as highlighted in Chapter Two above with priority given to treatment through the TasP programme). In his opinion however, he feels that while treatment is important, education should also be allocated enough resources to help with the teaching and learning. As such, he veers towards a model which would fund more of the preventative educational initiatives rather than treatment, which would benefit the students directly. Malawi is a signatory of UNAIDS’ 90-90-90 which aligns with TasP’s commitment to end AIDS by 2030 (UNAIDS, 2014). It is therefore interesting to note the disconnection that exists between what the state aims to achieve through the various preventative interventions and what resources are available at school level. Such a disconnection between the teacher and what the state aims to achieve could potentially be misinterpreted by the teacher that their area is not
so much of a priority in comparison to other areas.

While Mr Kadzuwa acknowledges that teaching can be a challenge at times due to structural problems like salary delays, he displays a genuine sense of fulfilment which he enjoys from the teaching as well as the appreciation he gets from the community.

‘This job is sometimes hard as sometimes we can go for months with no salary but then you feel sorry for the students, so you still come to work. When you are also in the community some parents come and thank you for having helped their children complete secondary school [education].’

Mr Kadzuwa’s sentiments therefore seems to stem from a dynamic interplay between factors personal to him, along with societal expectations and how he views himself. Exemplifying Ho and Au’s (2006) understanding of job satisfaction - that it is a combination of what teachers need from their professional career and what they gain from it - Mr Kadzuwa feels incentivised enough to continue teaching despite the challenges, confirming Bennell and Akyeampong’ (2007) study, mentioned above, that teacher accountability to students is one of the motivating factors in why teachers would still teach despite the challenges they face.

5.4 Classroom discourses and factors impacting on teachers’ practice and students’ experiences

A given curriculum controls the actual educational purposes in the classroom setting, which is also where hidden curriculum (Gattett, 2010) may exist. As such, this section analyses how teachers interact with students including what strategies they use and in particular, how they teach around the different contextual factors surrounding them, by examining the teachers’ enactment and students’ experiences of LS[B]E through classroom observations. According to Honig (2006), teachers usually implement syllabi relative to their (conflicting) subjective interpretations of the content. It is for this reason that this section will specifically pay closer attention to how teachers (within their social contexts) use resources, introduce and summarise topics, explain concepts, give instructions, interact with students, and use classroom space (including keeping order).
5.4.1 Content knowledge and adaptation

For Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa to implement LS[B]E effectively, they are expected to receive adequate preparation which should include strong pedagogical content knowledge and the development of a critical consciousness. Teacher preparation, however, not sufficient as pedagogical content knowledge demands a teacher’s ability to transform the content knowledge they possess, into forms which are powerful and yet adaptive to variations in ability and background of students. It is therefore assumed that teachers’ perceived sense-making should not only emanate from their direct experiences and information conveyed vicariously and through social evaluation, but also through acquired knowledge in other subject areas other than their specialties.

Despite their different personalities (shaped by their training and personal beliefs as observed above), both Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa are aware of the responsibility entrusted in them to impart LS[B]E knowledge to students. Mr Chanza trained in Theology although he has been teaching Chichewa - a language subject which is quite different from LS[B]E, which is a social studies’ subject. Mr Kadzuwa who has also trained in Chichewa, feels more prepared to teach LS[B]E given his long teaching experience in contrast to Mr Chanza who has so far had a shorter teaching career. In a rigorous review conducted by Westbrook et al. (2013) on teacher experience in LMICs, it was reported that teachers’ ability to teach does increase over the years, though other studies conducted in other regions (also reported by Westbrook et al., ibid) seem to suggest that it is not length of experience but their personal interest in teaching that makes them better teachers. The ability for teachers to adapt is more often associated with teachers who display job satisfaction than with those who feel demotivated.

Additionally, one of the most significant public policy issues facing many LMICs is getting enough qualified teachers into the classrooms. For instance, despite progress made on SSA’s pupil/teacher ratio (PTR), it remains above the 1990, with several countries including Malawi having struggled to achieve a PTR of 50:1 (in primary, while secondary school continues to decline (UNESCO, 2020). Such teacher shortages thus mean that teachers may end up teaching a subject they are not specifically trained for. It was therefore not surprising to find that Mr Kadzuwa has found himself in a similar circumstance with his headteacher agreeing that such problems are the norm:
'My main subject is Biology ... right now I am involved in teaching Maths and Chichewa because we don’t have enough teachers.’

‘Even when we ask for more subject specific teachers [from MoEST], they can only send us what is available and sometimes we may already have a teacher in that subject. So, when they come here, we have to allocate them to a subject that does not have enough teachers. And some find this hard because they have no idea how to prepare for the lesson for that subject though it should really be the same.’

Mr Kadzuwa’s and the headteacher’s acknowledgements of teacher misallocation in their school emphasises how the implementation of any such subjects are jeopardised due to structural problems beyond their control. As reported by Masino and Niño-Zarazúa (2015), the problem of teacher misallocation in LMICs is not that schools are allocated unqualified teachers for specific subjects, but that such teachers are expected to teach subjects which they are not trained for. As can be observed above, there is often a mismatch between schools’ needs and the teachers they get. Such mismatches are bound to create further structural implementation problems. Nevertheless, scholars of teacher sense-making (as reported in Bertram, 2008) would argue that all teachers at school level should indeed be adaptive and regard any specific task allocated to them positively, as the training they receive is not necessarily specific to just one subject. However, if a teacher’s level of confidence is low due to limited subject content knowledge, they would find it difficult to implement a subject they have not had any specific training in and therefore would shy away from teaching such subjects despite the existence of a well-structured curriculum and guidance.

Past research (Hattie, 2009; McCaffrey et al., 2004) on teacher knowledge of subject matter has provided compelling evidence that the quality of learning opportunities created by teachers affects students’ learning and motivation. Such perspectives assume that teachers’ low levels of knowledge content require that subjects be highly structured and provide specific instructions and sequence for implementation. Teacher guide- and student hand-books for instance, would follow a gradual sequential order which teachers are expected to follow. However, Tapinos (2016) in a study on limitations of teachers’ creativity, reported that teachers face a challenge in being creative thinkers in their teaching due to syllabus constraints, pedagogy and the way students are to be assessed. This in a way leaves very little room for innovation and transformation by teachers as they are bounded by such structural expectations. The
next section therefore analyses how Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa use teaching and learning resources, including time, and how this enables or hinders their implementation.

5.4.2 Mr Chanza’s and Mr Kadzuwa’s use of time, teaching and learning resources and classroom management

This section analyses how the selected teachers use teaching and learning materials (in addition to their own pedagogical content knowledge), how they engage with students and how they manage the classroom for impactful curriculum delivery. The resources considered here include: time; teacher guide- and student hand-books; lesson plans; chalk and chalk boards; and teacher notes.

5.4.2.1 Use of time

Time is a resource teachers must work with. It starts from the point of lesson planning. Formal teaching is regulated by school timetables (which teachers must abide by). LS[B]E’s shifting position in its classification from core (at the beginning of the research) to optional (at the end of the study) has had effects on how time is used. As such, LS[B]E has ranged from being a twice weekly 40-minute lesson to a single 40-minute lesson. Such classification volatility has affected teachers’ priorities, as the assessment of their own work is based on student performance, which naturally makes them focus more on subjects that are classified as core.

‘If I don’t have a lot of time, I’d rather prepare the students on subjects that will get tested [examined] as that is what is more important for me. LS[E] keeps changing you know, last year it was mandatory and now it is optional – I don’t really know where it is going. But this places pressure on me as a teacher as I also need to concentrate on examinable subjects, so I need to ensure I have covered all the material by exam time, and this is usually tough.’ (Mr Chanza)

‘When my work gets assessed, they look at how the students have done for that year and this leaves me with no choice but to focus on the examinable subjects as the optional ones do not count.’ (Mr Kadzuwa)

Both teachers emphasise the importance of ensuring that those subjects which are formally assessed are completed within the given time. However, this shows a mismatch with what curriculum developers aspired to when they were developing the LS[B]E
curriculum. As observed in Chapter Five above, while attention was given to the classification of the subject itself, not much thought had been given to the impact of the classification on teachers and the entire curriculum. If anything, the curriculum developers had wanted to make it core on the basis that teachers would then teach it accordingly. However, how this would impact on the remaining timetable was not given sufficient consideration to ensure appropriate implementation (whether as a core or optional subject).

As teachers are under so much pressure to deliver core subjects, their confidence and ability to balance time as well as manage new expectations around the adoption and application of novel teaching and learning methods is compromised. As reported by Kelly (2002) and Malambo (2000), the lack of curricular time and orientation makes it challenging for teachers to do their work appropriately. This may lead teachers, as asserted by Kelly (2002), to resort to rote teaching/learning and overly scientific interpretations without allowing proper understanding to develop for students. Teaching under such time constraining circumstances renders implementation of activities impossible, confusing, and may cause teachers to feel less equipped leading to the problem of deskillling.

It is interesting to note how the different teachers use and manage their times differently with Mr Chanza using lesson plans consistently even though he struggled with managing the time at classroom level, and Mr Kadzuwa using lesson plans on an ad hoc basis. Both use the lesson plans as a way to control the lesson in their own way to make sure that students are allocated sufficient time to work on their group work or lesson, given the time constraints they have to operate in. Teachers’ attitudes therefore influence how they prepare for a lesson and how they interact with students in the classroom. While teachers may have the best intentions to use time effectively, it is evident here that, because of expectations and accountability within the reporting systems, the distribution of time remains a challenge teachers must grapple with.

‘Even though I work out a time of how I want things to be done, there will always be something that comes up in the class that is beyond my control. You saw I lost time when I was punishing disruptive students and that takes off my time. So, when they come back together, it depends on how much time I have left as I also have to summarise what they have learnt.’ (Mr Chanza)
‘Sometimes I just look at the topic quickly before getting to class and then I teach without having prepared my lesson plan – these are not used all the time. I don’t think many of us use them because we struggle with time to do them and then write summaries after the class. We all find our own ways.’ (Mr Kadzuwa)

Students agreed that the issue of time insufficiency which affected how they had been taught.

‘[…] timing sometimes is not sufficient.’ Student037: 14yo Female

‘The periods are not enough as sometimes we don’t even have to summarise due to limitation of time.’ Student011: 15yo Female

‘… because the time in the classroom to include all these in the periods is not enough. Sometimes we don’t even have to summarise due to limitation of time.’ Student002: 12yo Male

The points raised above by students show the issues caused by having more learner-centred learning within a short space of time, which did not leave enough time for students to feed back on the discussions or hear other students’ thoughts. This shows that despite these shifts in teaching and learning styles, teachers struggle to manage their time thereby constricting and defeating the purpose of group work where students are unable to share feedback. In addition, the management of large class sizes makes the teachers’ jobs even more challenging. Balancing these two is challenging if not impossible unless the teacher has been well prepared. Nevertheless, students were also appreciative of the new approaches which, despite the time constraints, presented interesting and effective ways of learning.

‘… I remember things easier because of the plays then I can apply that to my life… if a drama [play] was done in the classroom, I can easily remember what it was about’.
Student017: 14yo Male

‘… Even though some of the students just play around when we have group work, some of us learn like that as that is an easy way to remember. Sometimes the teacher doesn’t even explain the things well and through our plays, we get to bottom of what we are learning, and we teach each other like that.’
Student025: 16yo Female

Students’ acknowledgement of the usefulness of learner-centred approaches
demonstrates how through such learning methods, students can adopt a more personalized learning which helps embody their personal experiences through their understanding of their specific topics since they can relate these to their own life experiences, thereby building their own sense of agency. Students expressed their perceptions of the new ways of teaching and learning. They described them using words like ‘like’, ‘happy with’, ‘is good’, ‘it makes learning enjoyable’, ‘we can help each other understand’, ‘helpful’, ‘we can participate’, and ‘makes remembering easy’. Students’ perceptions of their class engagement demonstrate their willingness to take on more challenges, become more resilient to failures and becoming intrinsically motivated. Such skills are relevant in competence-based subjects like LS[B]E where domain-specific self-concepts are compared with achievement in the same domain, which emphasises the strength of the relationship between these domains.

While these new learner-centred approaches are valuable in imparting knowledge, it is also worth to acknowledge that they can become troublesome where the teacher’s belief is that they are in control (as reported by Ročāne, 2015). Österholm (2009) asserts that a teacher’s experience is an important factor that affects their belief. As such, Kohn (2008, p. 4) suggests that learner-centred approaches require “a willingness to give up some control and let students take some ownership, which requires guts as well as talent”. Kennedy (2016) has additionally suggested that highly confident teachers are able to determine how long an activity will take, though for the novice teacher, this could create a barrier, especially if the teacher has not been fully prepared. Schweisfurth (2011) equally points to the pressures that teachers may face from learners and parents, where the outcome of the exams is more important, which drives teachers to steer away from learner-centred approaches.

The ideal ways of teaching and learning which students emphasised in FGDs included poems, sketches, drama, drama, and songs. While such learner-centred approaches are useful and similar to critical pedagogy as defined by Freire (1970), where teaching approaches empower learners with freedom to construct their knowledge (as opposed to banking into depositories where the teacher dominates and is the only one with knowledge), they are also dominated by structural challenges, for instance on how to manage such classes amidst tight school timetables.
The learner-centred pedagogical shift, while enhancing teachers’ and students’ experience, does not necessarily imply that students dictate the timing of the content, but rather what and how teaching methods are to be used, thereby emancipating learners to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours, which over time can transform the society. While teachers cannot entirely ignore what happens around them during a lesson, it also takes an experienced teacher to be able to employ strategies that enable them to teach systematically without a lesson plan. Learner-centred approaches do require more effort in lesson preparation, as the teacher is expected to demonstrate mastery of content as well as creativity in choosing activities to facilitate students achieving the set outcomes. As observed here, the teachers themselves are moving from lesson to lesson, and finding a balance between these activities within a limited time is perhaps an area that curriculum developers need to factor in when developing the curriculum and considering which pedagogical approaches to use. If the teachers must prepare lesson plans for each of the subjects they teach, that means they are expected to put more time into their day on top of the teaching. In addition to lesson preparation, teachers are also provided with resources which they can use to aid their teaching.

5.4.2.2 Use of teacher guide- and student hand-books

The GoM’s position on textbook policy for its Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Framework states that “Only the approved textbooks and other supplementary study materials shall be used in secondary schools.” (GoM, 2015, p. 12). Both Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa use their specified teacher guide-books though the latter also uses a supplementary teacher guide- and student hand-book, based on advice from colleagues based in conventional schools. In addition, they both have access to student hand-books which are easily accessible for them, although students can only access them during lessons as they are kept in the school library. Mr Chanza also uses a lesson plan while Mr Kadzuwa rarely uses one.

‘I do not have time when I finish my lesson or before I come into the school. As long as I have the [teacher guide-] book, I know what I am doing.’ (Mr Chanza)

‘You see the things you can learn from friends [peers] is a lot. We tell each other what we are going through and when I was told of these other [supplementary] books, I came back and told the head [teacher] to ask if these could be bought
Despite the school providing the additional resources, Mr Chanza relies solely on one main resource whereas Mr Kadzuwa goes further and uses an additional resource which he feels aids his teaching. This in a way shows their different attitudes towards the roles they play. Both teachers here prepare for lessons differently, likely influenced by their own self-beliefs about what they can and cannot do. It is also clear that despite continuing time constraints, support from teacher peers is a driving motivational factor in decisions to try out new supplementary material. Through their different resource choices, each teacher puts a different personal touch on how they impart knowledge to students. As Bondy and Ross (2008, p. 54) state, “what is missing is not skill in lesson planning, but a teacher stance that communicates both warmth and a non-negotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect”. As pointed out earlier, Mr Chanza does seem less approachable in comparison to Mr Kadzuwa who engages with the students more than his counterpart.

Past studies on teacher incentives by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) show that if teachers feel they are provided with resources, they are more likely to feel incentivised to teach, though this was not the case in this study. In addition to books, teachers should also be supplied with illustrative material to display on classroom walls as this helps remind students of what they learned. Illustrative materials are understood to aid implementation of (difficult) syllabi. The case study school had no such illustrative material on display due to lack of resources. However, having multiple resources to aid with the teaching does not always translate into better outcomes for teachers as these resources can sometimes be used inconsistently.

While students were also supplied with the learning guide-books, the data shows that students did not have access to the resources as much as they would have liked. As observed elsewhere, the resources were only available during lessons and were afterwards immediately taken back into the library.

‘I would like to have some books which we can look at while at home in case we have some questions and we can go back to these books for clarifications. We don’t have enough books in the school, and these are usually kept in the Library, so they only come out during a lesson and then are taken back after a lesson.’
Student024: 15yo female
‘I’ve never got the books because I know they’re not enough. We are given some notes like a summary on the black board.’ Student033: 15yo male

‘Our books are usually in the library and we can’t take them out of school. This is why you can’t see our books for LS as they are there.’ Student001: 16yo Female

Mr Chanza acknowledges the importance of hand-books as they are meant to facilitate the in- and out-of-classroom activities as reported by Yu (2007) whose study, conducted in Eastern and Southern Africa, highlights the link between availability of teaching and learning resources and learning outcomes. The access restriction to student hand-books is not new especially in resource-constrained LMICs where resources are only given to students during lessons. Teachers in the study alluded to the fact that students are careless when it comes to looking after school property and that where the resources are supplied, they are used for other purposes, for example, hand-books may be used as umbrellas. As such, this reduces their usefulness to the age groups below them, since such resources are not necessarily replaced each year. Whatever reasons may be behind the usage and storage of such resources, keeping them away from the students, whose learning they are meant to facilitate, hinders their exploratory ways of learning let alone referencing should they have an area to refer back to. The next section therefore analyses the specific classroom discourse and patterns of communication between the teachers and the students.

5.5 Mr Kadzuwa’s and Mr Chanza’s selected classroom practice and management

In order to observe classroom enactment, teacher observations were conducted to determine how teachers’ interacted with and managed students at classroom level. It has been reported by Westbrook et al. (2013) that teachers in LMICs often face a myriad of challenges when it comes to implementing curriculum at classroom level, some of which include large classroom sizes, a lack of teaching and learning resources, multi-age students, etc. All these factors impact on how teachers teach. Both Mr Kadzuwa and Mr Chanza use the following teaching materials: Life Skills and Sexual and Reproductive Health Education for Malawi Junior Secondary Education (MIE, 2004b; 2011). In addition, Mr Kadzuwa uses Junior Secondary Life Skills Teacher and Student Guides (Kadyoma et al., 2012). The section below discusses Mr Kadzuwa’s and Mr Chanza’s classroom practices and management.
5.5.1 An analysis of teaching and learning in Mr Chanza’s lessons

While there are only six LS(B)E-specific topics in the syllabus, a total of 30 LSE lessons (specifically on SRHE) were observed over a longer period of time (see Chapter Three). These observations took place in order to pick up on any variations in practice, and on how SRHE was connected to HIV where it was appropriate. The nature of the observations followed observation guidance (Appendix 8). The guide helped me pay special attention to how teachers taught, engaged with and managed students, as well as how students engaged with the teachers and participated in the classroom.

Excerpt 1: Mr Chanza’s general introduction

Mr Chanza enters the classroom carrying his guide-book, eight student hand-books, hand-written cards which include topics to be covered and timings (though he does not have a watch or a wall clock), and pieces of chalk. Students [42 in total] stand up to greet him
Teacher: I’m fine. Please sit down. [Students sit down, and class is quiet]

Mr Chanza scribbles ‘Signs and symptoms of STIs including HIV and AIDS’ on the chalk board, i.e. the topic being covered.

Teacher: As you can see from the chalk board, today we are going to learn about signs and symptoms of STIs including HIV and AIDS. But before we do that, can you remind me what we did yesterday? He looks at the students expectantly and waits for them to raise their hands to recall the information.

Students (in unison): we learnt about the STIs and modes of transmission.
Teacher: And?
Students (in unison): inaudible words as they are all saying different things.
Teacher: No, no, no! Raise your hands if you want to say anything as I can’t hear you all talk at the same time.

Students start raising hands and the teacher chooses one student.

Student 1: We learnt that there are many STIs out there which can infect us.
Teacher: So, we all understand what STI stands for?

Students (in unison): Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) Sir.
Teacher: Yes. And what else can you tell me about yesterday’s lesson?
Student 2: If you have [unprotected] sex you can get a STI and you start developing symptoms like itching [other students giggle].
Teacher: Class, be serious eh as this is no joke.

Student 3: We looked at examples of STIs including HIV and that even though most STIs are treatable, HIV doesn’t have [a] treatable cure yet.

Teacher: All these details are correct. Thank you for these answers. [After a brief pause, the teacher recaps the previous lesson by reading the main headings from the guide-book which he is using. This takes five minutes]

Teacher walks around the classroom to distribute the student hand-books though this varies on a daily basis based on how full it is and how easy it is to move around the desks.
The way a teacher introduces a topic in a classroom is important. The role of the teacher in inquiry instruction is widely recognised as essential (Walker and Shore, 2015; Gyllenpalm, Wickman and Holmgren, 2010; McDonald and Songer, 2008; McNeill, Pimentel and Strauss, 2011). According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2012), students must be able to recall previous lessons for gradual learning processes through topics to occur, and that it is crucial for teachers to check students’ understanding before proceeding to the next topic.

Mr Chanza, in the introduction provided above, takes on an authoritative and controlling role by issuing instructions, compelling students to reflect on the previous lesson, and helping them prepare for the new one. Students are not, however, allowed to interrupt him, thus limiting their chances to process information without losing its meaning. LSBE requires that students interrupt teachers as they try to understand the knowledge they are gaining, rather than barring them from such interruptions which discourages them from being engaged in the rest of the lesson. Mr Chanza is then able to manage the classroom within the first five minutes of his lesson.

While the introduction is brief, further instructions for the specific group work outlined below (including duration) are provided in writing on the board. Students are not given an opportunity to seek clarification; they comply with Mr Chanza’s orders. Although the teacher must manage a large multi-age classroom within a limited time frame, allowing students to interrupt might encourage them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. What Mr Chanza displays here is similar to what Altinyelken (2010b) observed in the Ugandan curriculum change where teachers struggled to avoid frontal teaching partly due to their lack of skills in the language of instruction (English, which is a second language, was the language of instruction in this case). By staying in control, teachers then managed to stay within their comfort zones. While Mr Chanza verbally demonstrates eagerness to hear from students during his introduction, he is not similarly receptive when delivering group work instructions.

Students generally share desk space and girls sit with girls and boys with boys. In the group work exercise, students are requested to list different STIs including their signs and symptoms. After the class reconvenes, groups are compelled to share the results of their deliberations:
Group 3 (boys): Gonorrhoea and syphilis [examples of STIs]. There is pain when passing urine, one has genital itching, there are sores on genital parts and there is some discharge if you are a woman.

T: Okay, clap hands for Group 3. Can Group 4 come and present their findings too please?

Mr Chanza in this case did not allow other students to react nor ask questions about what they heard but rather proceeded to the next group quickly. According to Haskell (2001, p. 32), the vertical transfer of knowledge does call for teachers to ensure that the “learning necessitates prerequisite skills”. In addition, Salomon and Perkins (1989) argue that the transfer of knowledge and skills is not necessarily a single phenomenon but that it is a complex, conditioned event, interrelated with what is being transferred, by whom, when, and where. It could therefore be argued here that teachers to some extent must ensure that students have understood concepts during enactment before moving.

In the example above, it is not clear if ‘signs’ and ‘symptoms’ are one and the same or not. While the teaching and learning resources do not explicitly state the importance of distinguishing between an STI sign, e.g., vaginal discharge; and a symptom, e.g., itchiness of pubic areas, these are key distinctions that students need to understand, so that they get a sense of what symptoms they may get. However, instead of clarifying, Mr Chanza proceeds with the next group’s presentation.

While the teaching and learning resources did not go into detail on the differences between HIV and other STIs, it is equally important for the teachers to stress that for STIs, one can be asymptomatic for a long time thus increasing the risk of spreading the diseases. Such precision is great importance as if STIs are left untreated for a long period, serious health complications can occur. Students are further advised “not to ask meanings of words” but to rather “check them in your spare time as to what they mean”. Engaging with students when they require clarification is crucial for effective implementation, as otherwise, students may lose interest. Due to time constraints, only four of six groups were able to present before the end of the period and as the teacher has another class to go to, there was very little time to summarise, hence Mr Chanza only repeated and read out loud the outlined list of objectives in his guide-book.
5.5.1.1 The cognitive demand in LS[B]E lessons

The opening line introducing each topic (in the supplementary books) states “By the end of this topic, students should be able to examine ... identify ... explain ...” (Kadyoma, Mumbi and Mukachi, 2012; Kadyoma et al., 2012). Mr Chanza, who does not use the supplementary books consistently, asked students to ‘recall’ previous lessons. And they were, to a limited extent, allowed to ask questions during his lessons, or waited to be prompted by the teacher. While I did not count the number of questions Mr Chanza asked in each lesson, I observed his questions to be of lower order thinking; they mostly required a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ rather requiring students to expand or clarify points, despite explicitly stated objectives calling for higher order thinking discussion for each topic.

Mr Chanza solely used the mandatory teacher guide-book which, lays out similar expectations in relation to knowledge acquisition. For instance, the textbook specifically states, “by end of this topic, students should be able to summarise ...”. This demonstrates an expectation for higher order thinking. In contrast, Mr Chanza’s topic introductions and guidance for group work utilised a lower order cognitive questioning and reasoning as he employed words such as ‘can you remember/understand ...’. This order of questioning expects students to ‘give examples’, ‘describe’, or ‘list’. There were occasions when students were either quiet when called upon or gave incorrect responses altogether. Whilst Mr Chanza repeated the instructions of a given exercise (despite his limited content knowledge on some topics), students’ difficulties were compounded by the fact that he was simply repeating what was written in the textbooks, without attempting to rephrase. As such, students would merely work on their own understanding of what was expected of them, thereby defeating the purpose of the lesson. A teacher with mastery of content and strong verbal persuasion skills would have, in this case, facilitated the elaboration further through the use of alternative methods of enquiry and concept explanations which encourage student participation, especially for those that are shy and timid. Using encouraging words and maintaining eye contact with students would also have been useful in this specific case.
Excerpt 2: from lesson observed with regard to cognitive demand

**Introductory Remarks:** Mr Chanza quickly re-capped the previous lesson (self-esteem and self-awareness) by reading out main headings from the guide-book without steering away from what is prescribed in the book. This also meant he did not keep any eye contact with the students when reading out from the book. He reviewed the lesson’s content and asked students some questions to check they remembered what they had learnt.

Mr Chanza provided an overview of the current lesson: examples of STIs; ways of practising good health habits; and ways of STI transmission (following a sequential order) with an introduction lasting five minutes.

**Areas observed:** Mr Chanza used his guide-book and distributed six student hand-books (to a class of 48 students).

Teacher: Do not open your books while I am talking!

Today’s lesson will help you learn about how STIs including HIV and AIDS, can be prevented; and also, to look at ways of coping with STIs including HIV and AIDS.

So, who can tell me their understanding of STIs? Class: Most students raise their hands.

Mr Chanza selects one student.

Student 05: Sexually transmitted disease Sir. Teacher: Who else?

Student 13: Sexually transmitted infections.

Teacher: Okay, sexually transmitted infections. What do we mean by that? (Silence in the classroom) So you can give me the full abbreviation, but you cannot tell me what it means eh? I want you to tell me what it means to have an STI.

Student 07: Like syphilis or gonorrhoea. Student 11: Candidiasis and HIV.

Some other students: They are using wrong frame [concepts] Sir!

Teacher: It is not necessary for this to take priority as I want you to understand the content more than anything else.

Teacher: So, how and why do people get STIs including HIV? Does anybody know?

As a follow up (despite the fact students hadn’t clearly addressed the question asked, the teacher still moves on), a case study exercise is given, and students are asked to identify the skills necessary for to prevent sexually transmitted infections. They are asked to form groups of eight (within the classroom space) and to discuss this and report back. The students have not been given any specific time for when they should report back. The case study in the guide-book is as follows:

‘Jane is a Form 1 girl at Fatsani CDSS, 50 km from her home. Since there was no public transport for Jane to be using on a daily basis, she opted to rent a room at Mr Banda’s residence. Mr Banda was a businessman who had a shop at a trading centre closer to Jane’s school. He enticed her to fall in love with him and promised that she would live in the room free of charge. Jane reacted by saying that she was not interested to have a sexual relationship with him. She threatened to move out of the room if he continued pestering her’.
Questions to be answered:
1. If you were Jane, how would you have reacted to Mr Banda’s request?
2. What skills does Jane demonstrate which are important in the prevention of HIV infection?
3. Role play the situations in the story.
4. Discuss the lessons learnt in the role play.

Student groups are named after animals, i.e. Rabbit; Lion; Zebra; Leopard; and Hyena. Mr Chanza uses words like ‘pay attention’, ‘I point out here’, ‘it is very important’ to emphasise points.

During group work, Mr Chanza moves around all groups to check on progress and to provide further guidance. It is during this time that he announces students have 20 minutes for the exercise before reporting back.

Feeding back after 25 minutes: All groups agree that Jane should be ‘assertive’ and not ‘disrespectful’ and tell Mr Banda that what he is saying is wrong and that she will report him to others. Mr Chanza encourages the students to use their imagination and say what they want to say even if someone may already have given the same response. While the teacher also encourages students to think and link this exercise to yesterday’s lesson, he also murmurs to the class ‘do not ask me the meaning of words but write them down and check in the office [staff room] instead of wasting time and asking silly questions’. He is basically asking the students to ensure they stick to the plan as outlined.

While Mr Chanza is in control, he is also a teacher who follows what the guide-books suggest and reads word for word from the textbook without any deviation. Throughout the lesson, Mr Chanza shifts between different taxonomy levels, using both lower and higher levels of cognitive demand. A lower level of cognitive demand is applied when he asks students to state what STI stands for, requiring only simple recall and response. During the same lesson, students are asked to analyse what skills are required to prevent HIV.

Mr Chanza further elaborates and clarifies by expanding students’ feedback, explaining that the STI examples of syphilis and gonorrhoea, implied by students to be the same infection, are rather two different ones. Here, he expands students’ knowledge by clarifying important differences. The question of ‘how and why people get STIs including HIV’ however, is essentially a higher order question as it requires students to consider various ways one could be infected. However, the importance of the task here, coupled with Mr Chanza’s authority, impacts on how students think as it lends itself to the teacher maintaining a high demand level. The way he asks the class to reflect on the question of ‘how’ and ‘why’ calls for further explanations from the students. In the
exercise outlined above, the task is thus broken down into smaller sub-tasks which according to Smith (2000), renders cognitive demands associated with lower order thinking, which may enable the accuracy of answers at the expense of thinking and reasoning processes.

The teacher sets homework for students (despite them not having access to the student hand-books after lesson) to compose poems on STIs (specifically HIV and AIDS), further emphasising lower cognitive demand tasks.

‘AIDS, what is AIDS? AIDS is an STI
AIDS is a killer!
You better watch out!
AIDS can look ‘beautiful’ [sic] So, remember that AIDS AIDS is an STI that kills!’

Student poem: 14yo Male

Here the cognitive demand of the task is classified as low. According to Stein et al. (2009), the teacher could have used the same question to ask the students to think of HIV and AIDS as a problem but linking with how HIV changes into becoming AIDS. While the student is correct about AIDS, there are no factual details that would in this case increase their and other students’ further understanding of why AIDS is a killer. Students’ responses play an important role in meaningful learning and acquisition.

Despite the limited access to the student hand-books, the students have still been creative in that they have used information they recall about the specific STI to come up with facts that show their understanding in terms of the dangers of HIV and AIDS. They show their interpretation of the STIs’ effects on their lives and how they should not get deceived with healthy-looking people and take risks by having unprotected sex. The developed curriculum does not set any specific homework and while Mr Chanza would like the students to work more on specific topics to compensate for the time he cannot make up in the classroom, lack of access to the said guide-books hinders how the students can put more effort into the said homework. However, Hill et al. (1986) deny the link between homework and student achievement, similar to Cauley and McMillan (2009) who believe homework brings detrimental effects by shifting the focus away from mastery of abilities that might be judged. It is therefore not surprising in this
instance that Mr Chanza therefore wants to use the extra time for students to finalise lessons that may not have been completed at classroom, rather than set it as homework.

5.5.2 An analysis of teaching and learning in Mr Kadzuwa’s lessons

Of the total of 30 lessons observed, 12 took place in Mr Kadzuwa’s LS[B]E lessons. Following the classroom observation guide (Appendix 8), variations in how they each taught, interacted and engaged with students, and managed the classrooms, were reviewed.

Mr Kadzuwa mostly walks into the classroom carrying a lesson plan, chalk, and his teacher guide-book and no student hand-books, although he eventually asks a female student to pick up 10 such books from the staff room prior to him having moved them already from the library. Whether he uses a lesson plan or not varies from day-to-day; as although he always prepares one in advance, he does not always bring it into the classroom. He acknowledges that the supplementary books have more information and explain clearer than our books hence his preference. The supplementary guide-books clearly outline a sequential order of steps to follow including examples of the inquiry methods to be used. As such, he rarely has to repeat or clarify instructions that he gives out to students as he is able to set them out clearly in the first instance and when he recognises difficult concepts, he is able to use alternative words in the introduction to students.
In contrast to Mr Chanza’s opening to recap the previous session, Mr Kadzuwa goes straight into the day’s topic. The students wait for prompts, leaving control to Mr Kadzuwa although he encourages students’ active participation through explicit requests. Mr Kadzuwa’s physical orientation facing the chalkboard makes it impossible for him to gauge whether students understand what he is saying (and students are further disadvantaged by the lack of textbooks to refer to the topic). How a teacher physically positions themselves is always relational as through their positioning, students can either be encouraged or restricted in terms of their participation. According to Gurtman (2009) the degree to which one controls the interaction, projects either power or friendliness in a classroom setting. The objectives are read out and therefore help set expectations for both high and low order reasoning. Words such as ‘describe’, ‘justify’, and ‘suggest’ imply high order reasoning, while ‘making’ encourages students to create something through lower order reasoning. Below is an excerpt of my notes from the course of the lesson.
Excerpt 4: during the course of the lesson

Teacher: Okay, so today can you tell me about the factors to be considered in decision making?

(Teacher is interrupted by his own mobile phone ringing while students are raising their hands to respond to the question. I can hear some commotion starting to build up and the teacher switches off his mobile phone and apologises to the students and he repeats the objectives of the lesson again.)

Teacher: Knowledge is analysing the importance of something to make a decision. For example, choosing to continue with education and not to marry.

- Value analysis and clarifications – what is the analysis of values? Can you identify the challenges of particular values? For example, having difficulties with understanding English if you dropped out of school early; early marriage which results in a 21-year old boy and a 14-year old girl having kids. So, you need to ask yourself what will be of importance and what the consequences of having many children are [teacher looks at the students and pauses but students are also listening intently].

Teacher: The problem with that is the dependency, taking care of young children, buying clothes and shoes. You need to be careful in analysing situations when involved in decision making. For example, some of you are into ‘chamba’ [drugs] – this will not help you at all and you will just cause problems for others.

Students still sitting silently, and others are making notes in their notebooks.

Teacher: You can predict and choose a cause [course] of action through human dignity and morals. For example, the dressing of some women in shorts and not dresses or trousers. People make perceptions of you based on your dressing. The way a boy would have an unusual haircut. The morals and values matter.

Students: Quiet and just nodding their heads.

Class is interrupted by late-comers and teachers tells them off, but they are let into the lesson.

Teacher: ‘Msinkhu ukuza’ – my age mates who are well-educated are referred to as ‘msinkhu ukuza’ meaning that though their height is short, their hard working has paid off. So, when the family perceives you as a failure and you believe in that, then you will fail. Educated people have less children and this is part of what?

Students: Decision making!

Teacher: It’s the same thing as being in these girlfriend and boyfriend relationships – some of you have more than one!

Students: Laughing.

Teacher: Can you decide on the action to take you that will give you more problems – I want you to choose a topic.
Students: Silent and no reaction

Teacher: *explains the concept in the mother-tongue*

Students: *Almost the whole class raising hands to give a response.*

*The one student the teacher chooses seems a timid girl and she says, ‘like having sex with a married man’.*

*The rest of the class give out loud cheers and some boys whistle too.*

Teacher: Good. That is a good example. That is a bad career choice.

This student has talked about ‘pre-marital sex’ – what does it mean? It means having sex whilst young before the recommended age or generally having sex whilst young like when you are in Standard 4 or 5, that is not good eh?

Students: *Ih Sir, yes Sir!*

Teacher: What steps would you then follow to make rational decisions on pre-marital sex? He then sketches on the blackboard a chart for problem identification and how one can make the right decision.

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Problem

Identification option

Social inquiry / knowledge  Product of previous inquiry  Value inquiry / value clarification

Consequences

Rational decision
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Student X: Is it good or bad to have an abortion as a student Sir?

Teacher: Killing of the baby in the womb of a woman is called what?

Students: Abortion!

Teacher: This has a positive as well as a negative impact. If it is done in good [medical]
conditions you will continue with your education. In many cases if not done properly the girl will have dilemmas like what?

Student Y: Long illnesses which she may die from.

Teacher: Yes, and this will make her lose out on school. And also, the non-sterilised equipment will have disturbed her reproductive organs which may what?

Student Z: Death or not able to have any more children.

Teacher: *Walks to student X and states* abortion is bad so do not encourage your girl or wife to have it.

So, on social inquiry – how you mix with the opposite peers, you can learn from others. On value inquiry – what would be the value of having pre-marital sex? Others learn from far [others’ experiences] but others will learn when it is there [their experience]. You need to ask yourself what the benefit in all this is. One must have the knowledge of pre-marital sex or ‘kusuta chamba’ [drugs]. Having knowledge will help with decision making and to make an inquiry. This will be the product of previous inquiries which eventually leads to values clarification. Then you can make decisions, and this will have consequences. Are we together?
Students: Yes Sir!

Mr Kadzuwa’s concentration, as well as that of the students, is disrupted at the beginning of the lesson by his ringing mobile phone. As he is the authority figure in the classroom, students await his further instructions while he steps out of the classroom to attend to his mobile. However, his interaction with students throughout the lesson involves verbal persuasion and positive feedback when students respond or make comments. Additionally, he compels students to use Bloom’s comprehension, application and analysis by asking them direct questions which they must paraphrase and reinterpret by linking to their own personal experiences. This renders the task one which requires higher order cognitive thinking. Most experienced teachers are able to use such strategies as a way to engage students and whilst Mr Kadzuwa retains overall control of the classroom, he does not restrict the access of those students who were running late and instead lets them attend the lesson. Mr Kadzuwa however, misses an opportunity to reflect on their practice where he could potentially also draw out the gender equity in this instance. Specifically, when he refers to ‘abortion’, ‘girl having dilemma’, and ‘impact on her reproductive health’, this could be an opportunity to indicate that pregnancy is not a problem only for the woman involved. This omission could stem from his own personal gender bias. This is, however, not surprising as Sadker and Sadker (1994) do suggest that the hidden curriculum perpetuates male dominance
and unequal treatment of boys and girls in the classroom as a result of teachers’ biases. The teacher in this case could potentially mitigate their gender bias by not favouring one side or the other; as well as drawing out the silences in the teaching highlighting how, for example, pregnancy impacts on males as well.

At the same time, Mr Kadzuwa does not display any preferential treatment to the female and male students as he encourages all students (both loud and timid ones) to participate. As such, he varies whom he picks, thereby encouraging those who are naturally timid (mostly girls as most boys are loud) and otherwise less likely to participate to be involved and engaged. In a study conducted by Ida (2017, p. 144) on what makes a good teacher, students reported that a good teacher “makes them understand the teaching material, is objective, pays attention to the students, helps with their problems and encourages them”.

Mr Kadzuwa’s moral position comes out strongly during teaching as he constantly discourages students from engaging in sexual activity and refers to abstinence frequently, inadvertently promoting the dominant culture through the depiction of traditional heterosexual family. Students are split between familial and community expectations and wanting to explore sexuality as evidenced below:

‘... when the teachers are teaching, they stress a lot on abstinence even though the other methods are also there. It is like, they select some of the topics to emphasize on. There’s not much being talked about around how to use a condom. They try to talk a little on being faithful, but condom use is nothing. A lot of us want to hear more also about the other topics and areas.’ Student002: 14yo Male

Using the condom is not good at all as you can still get infections including HIV as other people put holes deliberately in the condoms. Being faithful might not be the best either as other people have so many boyfriends and girlfriends and maybe one of these might already be infected by HIV so it can be easy for you to get infected.’ Student004: 15yo Female

‘... these habits that they teach us about A, B, C, I find that these are useful but for some of my friends, I don’t think these are working ... because some of them ... they tell you that ‘practice makes perfect.’ Student011: 13yo Male

As all students come from the area where the school is (i.e., predominantly Chewa
region), they felt some internal conflict between their religious beliefs and some cultural beliefs, e.g., initiation rites and being a Christian where the church advocates for abstinence and initiation rites encouraging premarital sex as part of the initiation rites. Such conflicts were equally discussed in both boys’ and girls’ FGDs where those that indicated they were content with the conservative education had an affiliation with some form of religion, e.g. ‘I am Chewa but also a Roman Catholic’ (Girls FGD), and ‘I do nyau and yet we go to church every Sunday where they tell us different things’ (Boys FGD). It is therefore not surprising to see the different conflicts that adolescents have, as according to Dilorio, Pluhar and Belcher (2003) adolescent’s sexual decision making is greatly influenced by the powerful role that parents play in their children’s sexual socialisation. The next section focuses on the concluding remarks of the lesson.
Excerpt 5: conclusion of the lesson

Teacher: The final stage is rational decision – even if they make jokes about you but because you know your stand, right?
Students: Yes Sir!
Teacher: You see this education that some of you might think is a waste of your time – this idea is wrong. When you are educated you can realise your potential. For example, I am educated and so is my wife and so we have no problems.

_Students chuckle uncontrollably while boys are using the desks like drums and whistling at the same time. While the teacher states this in abstract, he is generally meaning there are no ‘sexual health problems in his marriage’ because they have only engaged in sex after marriage._

Teacher: The next step is justifying the cause of action [he demonstrates this by pointing to the problem identification diagram he made earlier on the board]. After this then what happens? Eh? What are the consequences of pre-marital sex?
Students: Pregnancy or diseases.
Teacher: Aha! Now you understand. So, what is the best choice of action here?
_Students raise their hands and the teacher picks two of the students._
Student A: Not to have sex
Sir. Student B: Not to have a girlfriend.

_The rest of the classroom laughs at Student B’s response. This shows the typical societal expectation which the student is clearly trying to live by hence the laughter from other students as they know the student is only saying it. I gathered later that the same student does have a girlfriend._

Teacher: In conclusion, we should apply these principles that we have learnt today. So, can you tell me what are the risky behaviours?
_Students raise their hands and teacher picks on three different students to shout out their responses._
Student C: Casanova!
Student D: Smoking _chamba_ [drugs]! Student E: Prostitution!

_In conclusion the teacher recaps on identifying the problem and using appropriate knowledge of that problem; examining alternatives and making a final good decision._

Teacher: So, girls, don’t start prostitution because you don’t have school fees no – you are better off starting a small job than getting involved in prostitution, you hear?

_Girl Students: Yes Sir!_

Teacher: Are there any areas that are not clear or you would like to have more clarifications on? So, why is it important to have knowledge on decision making?

_Students: It helps to avoid risky behaviour._

Mr Kadzuwa’s strategies are clearly encouraging of high-level cognitive thinking as he is gradually building knowledge in blocks (i.e., scaffolding) and thus allowing the building
of connections to help with deeper understanding of concepts. In as much as he may have good intentions to get better at his job, he cannot use both the mandated guide-book as well as the supplementary guide-book at the same time in the classroom as he would not have sufficient time to compare the different resources. This means that in his own spare time Mr Kadzuwa must allocate time to review the supplementary guide-books and compare how different or how useful they are in comparison to the prescribed ones. Smith (2008) asserts that teachers operate under ‘push-in-forces’ which are imposed upon schools. These include mandates and resource incentives which may sometimes be opportunities or barriers to curriculum enactment. For instance, Mr Kadzuwa’s use of supplementary textbooks means that he must be careful how he distributes his teaching time as he is bound by the timetable.

Mr Kadzuwa while authoritative at times, allows interaction with students and as such is considered more approachable as evidenced through student interviews.

‘Our teacher [Kadzuwa] is very open if you go to him with questions. This was not the case when I was in Form 1 when the teacher then [Mr Chanza] was always serious. He still appears serious even today.’ Student027: 15yo Male

‘Even though we laugh [joke] with Mr Kadzuwa in class, he can also be serious. You even know when he is serious because he changes how he speaks. But it makes it easier for me to know I can talk to him if I have a question.’ Student012: 16yo Male

As can be observed in the excerpt above, Mr Kadzuwa uses humor to relieve tension and get points across, and while students might laugh, they get what he is teaching them. In addition, he also uses students’ mother-tongue (rather than the instruction language) to explain difficult concepts, enabling them to grasp concepts and learn quicker. Thus, a lot of interaction occurs between the teacher and students, including with female students, whose quotes may not be included here as they were similar to the boy’s responses in terms of teacher approachability. The specific focus on teachers’ understanding of gender equality and how they interacted with learners of different sex was not systematically captured since it was not part of the study, though it is acknowledged that it is an important element to explore further on in terms of home teachers communicate and interact across the gender divide. In their study, Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2003), they highlight the importance of ensuring teachers are trained appropriately to treat both sexes equitably, be it through classroom interactions.
or punishments. However, it was interesting to observe how different the teacher approaches in terms of how they interacted with learners. Suffice to say, the higher number of teacher interactions with both male and female students may not necessarily mean that Mr Kadzuwa’s professed commitment toward gender equity. It is not clear however, if his ability to be accommodating of students’ behaviours is due to his being a new teacher to the school or his long work experience, or a more outgoing personality. Mr Kadzuwa also allowed students to respond creatively to questions (beyond the usual ‘yes/no’) and thus challenged them to expand beyond their normal ways of thinking. The supplementary materials that Mr Kadzuwa used enabled him to illustrate concepts in different ways since he had time to review these before the lesson.

5.5.1.3 The cognitive demand in LS[B]E lessons

Mr Kadzuwa would always re-phrase his questions if he noted that students failed to understand the first time. As such, even while operating under a tight timetable, he manages to move from a lower to a higher order of questioning, thus allowing students to grasp various concepts within a short period of time. He also provided space for students to ask him to clarify questions in and out of the classroom.

It is asserted by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) that experienced teachers make students comfortable and thus, feel encouraged to engage more in their own learning. Students were continually reminded not to fear judgement or being scolded for asking unreasonable questions. Mr Kadzuwa’s use and control of space was also quite different to Mr Chanza’s. For instance, during group work, students could go outside to discuss in their groups, and during presentations, students could interrupt and ask questions of their fellow students for clarification, etc.

Classroom disruption affected students’ participation when it came to seeking clarification, e.g., booing at others. Such disruptions can lead those who are already withdrawn to participate less and adopt alternative strategies, such as asking peers to present questions on their behalf. Both teachers admitted to having to manage disruptive behaviour which they asserted mostly came from male students who were forced to be in school by their parents. However, students were of the view that in most cases when they were punished it was because they had asked explicit sexual questions as evidenced below:
‘I’ve spoken about this in the classroom before as well that others laugh when you ask a [sensitive] question ... the teacher punishes us for asking and they use it as a threat’. Male Student004: 16yo Male

‘I have been asked to leave the classroom once for asking a [sensitive] question and other students didn’t ask other questions after me because they were afraid of being punished.’ Student045: 15yo Male

While the teachers acknowledged that dealing with sensitive questions was part of the job, they were also of the view that some students, especially male, would ask questions deliberately for fun rather than because they seriously wanted to understand further.

‘Some of the students just like to make fun in class by asking questions they know shouldn’t be asked. You saw that student who asked about condoms when they know they are not supposed to ask about those questions.’ (Mr Kadzuwa)

‘We get reports from teachers that some of the students cause problems in the classroom and think it is a game and ask silly questions instead of asking appropriate questions so the teachers have to be vigilant as you know they are working on tight timetables.’ (Headteacher)

As observed above, where teachers suspected students’ behaviour towards questions as being mischievous, their authoritative roles therefore demanded that they maintain order in the challenging multi-age classrooms whilst ensuring students received education. Teaching in multi-age classrooms comes with myriad and varied challenges as reported in a study conducted in Turkey by Aksoy (2008), who categorised the challenges as being political geographical, economic, and social, including the cultural barriers faced by teachers. Chapman (1995) agrees that teachers need time to group and regroup students for pedagogical purposes where they must manage their time and fulfil their teaching roles while also managing the entire classroom.

5.5.3 Mr Chanza’s and Mr Kadzuwa’s comparative teacher actions, mutations, use of space, and interactions with students

Clearly, several distinctions can be made between Mr Chanza’s and Mr Kadzuwa’s cognitive sense-making, evidenced through their different teaching styles, including use of learning resources, use of classroom space, their interaction with students, and different ways of persuading students to engage. Mr Chanza only used prescribed
teacher guide- and student hand-books while Mr Kadzuwa used additional supplementary resources. In using the supplementary guide-books, Mr Kadzuwa can compare the different resources thereby giving him more mastery of content which facilitates how he teaches at classroom level. As the supplementary guide-book is more up-to-date and provides clear guidance on what a teacher should do in a lesson, it gives him an added advantage in deciding what methods he can use and how best he can engage students in such large class sizes.

Mr Kadzuwa’s classroom space, although just as crowded as Mr Chanza’s due to many desks and narrow paths between rows, does not bar him from interacting with students. He moves across different rows during lessons while maintaining classroom control and managing disruptive behaviour. Despite Mr Chanza’s authoritative nature in the classroom, he does not usually move around the classroom and instead mostly stands at the front of the classroom throughout the lesson and only moves when students are in group work, when it is easier for him to traverse the space.

In addition to having appropriate pedagogic knowledge, teachers also have the responsibility of ensuring classroom control. The two teachers’ disciplinary approaches are also distinct. Mr Chanza disciplines disruptive students immediately without considering the implications of students missing their lessons and the further disruption it will cause to those still in the lesson. Mr Kadzuwa on the other hand, disciplines students at the end of the day, thus ensuring all students attend all their lessons. Mr Chanza firmly believes that teachers must discipline disruptive students immediately to ensure those that still want to learn have the opportunity to do so. Boys were usually given punishments of cutting the grass around the school, whereas girls were asked to sweep and mop the classroom floors.

‘... because of the nature of LSE topics, there are some students who just want to make noise and disrupt the class so I still have to exercise some control and this is why any student who is making noise in my class, is sent out on a punishment as there are other students who are seriously wanting to learn...I do not chat to students – they can never respect you as a teacher if you also chat with them outside the classroom. This is why they respect me. They are not my friends.’

In contrast, Mr Kadzuwa embraces social connection with students.
‘When you are so strict with these students sometimes it is not good. This is why the students will have their misconceptions because they also don’t know who to approach if the teachers are too strict. Talking to students should not only happen in the classroom. … As you have seen me, I do talk to these students even outside the classroom as that is the only way they are able to say the things they wouldn’t necessarily say in the classroom. The main thing is to ensure that they feel safe enough to approach you and also respect that you are their teacher.’

The different ways in which the teachers interact with their students are worth paying attention to, as the differences enable and, in some cases, inhibit the interaction, in some ways perpetuating some aspects of hidden curriculum. Classroom conduct and behaviour has been perceived to reinforce gender stereotypes (Buck and Parotta, 2014), as well as gender norms and power dynamics (Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Skelton, 1997; Skelton and Francis, 2009). Not surprisingly, Mr Chanza keeps his distance with students to maintain control, thereby making himself unapproachable. While Mr Kadzuwa is different, he also interacts with students in a cautious manner as he believes that students, especially girls, can also misinterpret his open nature. Indeed, teacher-student boundaries need to be treated cautiously as past research in SSA (Leach et. al., 2003) has revealed that some teachers abuse their positions of power to commit SRGBV. SRGBV is not uncommon in Malawi as reported by several studies (cf. Psaki, Mensch and Soler-Hampejsek, 2017; Bisika, Ntata and Konyani, 2009; USAID, 2007. While this may not have been observed in the study, this only means there are pedagogic implications with this background where teachers may choose to use their power to engage in unwanted sexual behaviour with learners, while others may withdraw from engaging with learners for fear of being perceived as perpetrators.

As can be seen above, the teachers presented different classroom management strategies. While each teacher’s approach is different, each teacher views their own approach to student engagement as reasonable, and each is likely to base these preferences on a range of factors including what they witness vicariously. Mr Chanza is clearly more concerned with ensuring order in the classroom even if it means by removing students from the classroom. He judges his capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning as closely linked to his ability to maintain authoritative control and keep order. Mr Kadzuwa on the other hand, while also intending to maintain classroom order, does not send students out during his lessons
and rather, asks them to see him at the end of the day, when he has dialogue with them before either giving them a punishment or sending them away with a warning. This disposition and different way of treating students allows him to maintain an approachable manner.

Generally, all students perceived their teachers to be impartial, offering responses such as, ‘my teacher treats me well’; ‘I can ask them sensitive questions outside the classroom’, etc. Most students considered the teacher engagement to be of adequate standard and therefore unproblematic.

‘Some of the students are too quiet and they do not even ask or make comments, so you have to push them sometimes. You have seen me in the classroom that I also like to ask those that are usually quiet even when I know they will not say anything.’

(Mr Kadzuwa)

As the more active students (mainly boys) got the most out of each lesson, the onus was on the teacher to ensure, using different tactics, that learners of all levels of ability could participate. Such verbal persuasion and/or encouragement techniques are favoured by proponents of teacher-efficacy (Claessens et al., 2017) who believe that if students feel encouraged that they can do something, they are capable of learning more quickly. But such persuasion can also be seen negatively in other instances such as where a teacher dissuades a student or puts them down when they want to ask a question or do not participate in classroom activities. Positive verbal persuasion works not only for students (as reported by Caprara et al., 2006 and Klassen and Tze, 2014), but also for teachers as it is known to help boost their teacher self-efficacy\(^\text{18}\) as reported by Pfitzner-Eden (2016).

Teachers’ repetition of students’ responses in the classroom interactions evaluates the information as correct, hence reinforcing authorised HIV knowledge. This format realise the regulative function of the discourse and facilitates shaping of the text into a form that is acceptable in line with legitimate HIV knowledge. Thus, the knowledge that is being reaffirmed in this case is not something that originated in the students’

\(^{18}\text{Bandura (1977, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as “the beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce attainments”}.$
personal experience, but rather, the students are being required within the lessons to recall information that has been produced in one context and is recontextualised into the current classroom, in the process compromising the extent to which the students can apply their own agency.

Importantly observed here was how the government through its policies, continues to perpetuate the heteronormative attitudes even through the handbooks and textbooks, where the females continue to be seen as subservient while males are perceived to be dominant, thereby reinforcing the power dynamics between them (Mellor and Epstein, 2006; Formby, 2011), and inequality. The teachers’ understanding and application of gender equity in the classrooms vary and at times contradictory with what they espouse to be gender equity, as though they had stated they believed their gender interactions were equitable, some of their classroom interactions appear misaligned with their actions.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter sought to bring together the developed LS[B]E curriculum and the classroom discourse to understand how teachers enact, and how students experience, the said curriculum. Guided by the second research sub-question of ‘how do teachers implement, and students experience the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?’, the results reveal the complex world in which teachers have to operate, and how this impacts on their pedagogic enactment of the LS[B]E curriculum, creating implications for those delivering such a subject. Also, students have their own ways of adapting to learning while also building on other existing knowledge they may bring into the classroom.

Teachers’ beliefs and values inform how they interact and engage with students. In addition, through the interactions with each other, the classroom discourse and patterns of communication reveal the different teaching patterns with one teacher engaging the students more than the other. However, in general, students appear to be obedient to the authority of the teachers, only reacting when being spoken to by the teachers. The dominant classroom discourse of recitation and similar triadic
communication patterns\textsuperscript{19} observed here is no different to other classroom studies, i.e., where the teacher is an ‘explorer’ of what students know, think and understand in relation to the knowledge prescribed in the LS[B]E’s curriculum.

The study shows correlation with Molinari and Mameli’s study (2010) on classroom discourse and how it is organised, indicating that it may shift depending on how a topic is introduced, how students respond and/or interact and how the teachers take it forward. As authors, teachers define how the sequence of each lesson, including how they elaborate information using clarification, reformulation or reflection that allows a structured form of dialogue with students. The results also reveal small variations between teachers’ uses of instructional methods with teacher directed questions and answers dominating in both classrooms, accounting for most of all teaching exchanges.

As the findings reveal, teachers who are often seen as technicians responsible for curriculum implementation, as well as change agents, are disconnected from those designing the curriculum. This means teachers often face difficulties in abiding by the curriculum due to the conditions in which they must operate the expectations they must meet as well operating with limited resources. As such, they make their own personal and inter-subjective interpretations of the curriculum to make it functional for them. Such interpretations are the result of their personal and contextual factors stemming from their beliefs, identities and pedagogic content knowledge, all of which influence how they teach and manage the classrooms. As such, according to Fenstermacher, Soltis and Sanger (2015), teachers are therefore caught between teaching morality and teaching morally where their dispositions are evident to the students through modelling. Teachers must therefore navigate complex interplays between choices, actions and mutations.

Classroom interactions should celebrate equitable teacher-learner and learner-learner interpersonal relationships over traditional power dynamics in which authority and knowledge rests with the teacher. While students see this shift as being useful and engaging, they also emphasise the lack of resources which makes it challenging to review content outside a lesson. Perhaps closer to teacher-led, but with some learner-

\textsuperscript{19} In triadic communication patterns, the teacher initiates the conversation, followed by a response from the students, which is in turn followed up by further discussion.
led activities (e.g., group work), the extent to which students can apply this outside the lesson is limited, due to the restrictions on resource accessibility. In addition, teacher assumptions are deeply entrenched in the traditional, formalist teacher-centred pedagogy despite encouragement to implement LS[B]E using learner-centred pedagogy. Therefore, they store the student resources elsewhere; they basically have control over the resources. In this case, both teachers remained authoritative although Mr Kadzuwa to a lesser extent than Mr Chanza.

It can therefore be concluded that based on the evidence, while the curriculum has specific intentions when being developed, implementation does to some extent get affected by the teacher’s own dispositions, manifested from their own values and beliefs, which to some extent, might affect how student experience the LS[B]E curriculum. In addition, their conservative attitudes reinforce the denial of adolescents’ sexual behaviour despite the availability of information portrayed in the media, wider world and students’ own experiences. This could be possible due to LS[B]E being an expert-dominated curriculum with very minimal involvement of teachers. While these experts contribute to the format of the curriculum itself, they rarely take the classroom context into account. This was clear in the different ways the two teachers mediated the LS[B]E curriculum. Understanding such implications is crucial for policymakers when developing curricula to ensure teachers’ efforts help reinforce the intended enactment. The failure of policymakers (who develop the curriculum) to adequately consider the myriad and highly contextual factors which impact teachers’ capabilities to adapt LS[B]E, ultimately hinders implementation, thereby affecting students’ experiences.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

6.1 Introduction

The thesis set out to understand how transnational education policies impact Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy in order for it to be interpreted into the LS[B]E curriculum for teaching, learning and assessment at classroom level. The GoM has ensured to include the good strategic documents on SRHR, gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS in LSE, though UNESCO (2019) admit that these are not well-articulated in the curriculum itself and that there is still room for improvement in its monitoring, evaluation and research. There have been major shifts in educational learning goals to ensure that learners are equipped with competencies such as problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking and communication, and these have impacted on how education and curriculum reforms are now shaped. UNESCO (ibid) further report that the LSE features on cognitive, affective, and skill-based objectives remain weak and that its content emphasises abstinence thereby not providing sufficient protective information on other issues, e.g., on pornography, sexting, cyberbullying, and young people living with HIV (YPLHIV) (among others). Using the overarching research question of ‘What ideas and discourses inform Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy and how is the developed curriculum implemented at classroom level?’, the study explored why LS[B]E takes the shape that it does and gets implemented in the way that it does, thereby revealing whose voices are heard and whose voices are silenced. The interpretive qualitative study analysis is mainly drawn from the three analytical levels of macro/policy, micro/intended curriculum, and classroom.

In order to try and understand the discourses around the LS[B]E curriculum, and its pedagogy and assessment, the thesis addressed the following two research sub-questions:

RQ1: What are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of the LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning and assessment?

RQ2: How do teachers implement, and students experience, the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?
This chapter therefore presents the study findings through the following sections: a summary of the main findings including: the knowledge contribution (6.2); the implications of the study for policy and practice (6.3); and the way forward (6.4).

6.2 Summary and discussion of key study findings and contribution to knowledge

This study extends our understanding of leadership practices throughout what is a complex process of curriculum development and implementation in Malawi; with policy and practical implications.

6.2.1 Contribution to knowledge

As outlined in Chapter Two above, several researchers (Miedema et al., 2011; Goldman, 2010; Measor, 2004) have reported on the lack of an articulated theoretical basis for researching into curriculum reform. While there is no denying the importance of SRE’s scientifically informed, rights-based, and conservative approaches to understanding such education reform, researching such an area using the three analytical levels of policy, intended curriculum and classroom levels as a framework, can be useful in exploring further why certain programmes succeed and/or fail. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to show a substantive methodological contribution towards using these concepts directly to understand the ideologies shaping the LS[B]E curriculum, the concepts from CT, structure and agency, have nonetheless provided an entry point for future research in which other researchers can expand on. The study addresses a key knowledge gap through its insights into how LS[B]E curriculum is developed and implemented in Malawian schools, where the culture is conservative.

Schmidt (2010, p. 15) argues that “without discourse understood as the exchange of ideas, it is very difficult to explain how ideas go from individual thought to collective action”. As reported by Nordin and Sundberg (2018), the analytical concepts in the study highlight the interplay of power at these different levels of curriculum development and implementation, therefore providing a relative causality (cf. Archer’s (2003) ‘analytical dualism’) which helps to separate ‘culture’, ‘structure’, and ‘agency’. This thereby enables the creating of a hierarchy of what is of most importance and what helps in the analysis of how policy may mutate when moving from one institutional context to another, i.e., from the policymakers developing the curriculum through to the schools where teachers mediate the curriculum for students’ understanding and according to
their own vocational ideas and ideological learnings and evaluation. It was through the persuasive discourses that various actors articulated their LS[B]E ideas (i.e., via policy actors to the public) to legitimise them, as outlined in Chapter Five above.

Reviewing the three levels above, this study shows that over time and through the continued interactions, social systems (which exist at different levels, be it institutional, family, community and individual) are continuously reproduced, as people (state and non-state actors, teachers, and students in this case) have the choice to move within these different levels which are sometimes overlapping, contradictory or precarious. For example, people will assume different identities depending on where they are in life. For instance, curriculum developers in this case (most of whom have a background in teaching) will have prioritised their institutional as well as personal interests at this level and may not necessarily immediately think of the implication for the teacher at classroom level.

It is worth mentioning as well that at these different levels individuals have the potential for agency, i.e., to choose to either follow one system of practice or to refuse, if not push back. In this study, it has been observed that through actors, there are different views on principles of content of the LS[B]E curriculum where others are of the strong opinion that it should be one that is controlled, i.e., through abstinence education, whereas others are strongly recommending CSE. The implementation at classroom level, shows that teachers in the study exercised their agential volitional practice where, despite what the ‘intended curriculum’ stipulates to be achieved, including how and when, they chose how to teach and interact with students. Through this agency, teachers actually choose which aspects they will address fully, especially where they feel contradicted on their own beliefs and cultural values. In this instance, the agency can be seen to be reproducing or negating each system/structure. Giddens’ (2004) concept of individual ‘practical consciousness’ in this case does indeed exceed discursive consciousness, that even though mistakes are made, teachers believe they are doing their best.

6.2.2 Key study findings: whose knowledge counts?

Nordin and Sundberg (2018) have reported that previous studies have shown there were several convergences as well as divergences between transnational education
policy trends and the construction of most curriculum reforms. For example, among the most salient and significant convergences the focus on prescribed curriculum standards and basic skills (literacy, numeracy and comprehension) by the state are obvious. Overall, the findings of this thesis reveal how complex it is to operate in such policy spaces, where different actors with different interests and values are negotiated and inform the discourse that frames the LS[B]E curriculum. The story that ought to be told from this study, therefore, is on the politics of whose knowledge matters.

Malawi is an interesting country which has been forged through the ideological and structural violence of colonialism. Due to its colonisation, Malawi has been underpinned by Christianity, heterosexuality and gender inequalities which are exacerbated by the patriarchal leanings of its societal relations. Similarly, South Africa has similar ideologies to Malawi where according to Bhana, Crewe and Aggleton (2019, p. 363) agree that “Conservative Christian principles were incorporated into local customs reproducing gender as binary and sexuality as shameful, both of which were to be controlled within heteronormative boundaries whilst upholding the powerful status of men”. As observed in the study, the conservative education and customs are adhered to and accepted as part of the normal society, though this is uncommon in the relation of AIDS governance to existing patterns of African governance which becomes part of the institutional isomorphism imposed by international funders (Swidler, 2006). It is therefore not surprising that the final shape of the curriculum shows a strong conservative moralist approach.

Similar ideologies are also sets of beliefs emanating from powerful groups in society, allegedly designed to protect the interests of the dominant. In this study for instance, the re-classification of LS[B]E from being a core to an optional subject, possibly due to the fact that it deals with sensitive issues around sex and sexuality and how it is difficult to address this in a conservative society, unlike subjects like Science and Physics, reflects an ideological bias. Additionally, this could also be perceived as a neoliberal approach to risk where the government focuses on the solution to the problem (rather than also on pleasure and rights) and assumes that individuals are rational and that they will act on information provided to them (Kippax et al., 2013); though we know this is not usually the case.
By shifting away from the labels such as “vulnerable” and/or “at-risk populations” when developing these policies, the importance of collective agency can be highlighted through socially related individuals via a sense of community. Such individualistic approaches also assume that the students then engage in static abstracted behaviours, in this case, unprotected sexual intercourse. However, as has been argued in other studies (Kippax et al., 2013), people do engage in other practices not necessarily tied to “sexual intercourse”, such as having affairs, engaging in hook ups, making love, etc. (Kippax, 2008; Kippax, 2010). This therefore calls for those making such policy decisions to also focus on notions of intimacy, desire, love, lust, pleasure and with cultural forms in which sexual practices are embedded (Hirsch et al., 2009).

Policy processes are known to be messy and complex with particular discourses shifting over time and often involving a multiplicity of actors each with different interests. As noted by Apple (1995), relations of domination and exploitation exist in the complex relationship between education policy and practice. In addition, discursive power is shown to be fluid over three different levels of macro/policy, micro/curriculum, and classroom (Carstensen and Schmidt n.d.). Firstly, it is reflected through ideas, where actors have the capacity to persuade other actors of the cognitive validity and/or normative value of their worldview through the use of ideational elements. Secondly, power over ideas is manifested as the capacity of actors to control and dominate the meaning of ideas through coercive, shaming or resisting alternative interpretations. Finally, power in ideas is demonstrated when certain ideas enjoy authority in structuring thought or institutionalising certain ideas at the expense of others.

As observed in this study and others, HIV prevention tends to take a vertical or top-down approach, i.e., from the expert to the individual, much like the “banking” approach to pedagogy critiqued by Freire (1983; 1993). While such approaches seek to fill up individuals’ deficit bank accounts with HIV prevention knowledge, they offer little or nothing in critical tools that might stimulate collective agency, which would potentially contribute towards how wider communities respond to risk brought about by HIV. The key study findings are therefore discussed below in response to the main overarching research question of ‘what ideas and discourses inform Malawi’s HIV and AIDS education policy and how is the developed curriculum implemented at classroom level?’. The findings are presented below in accordance with the three
analytical levels of macro/policy; micro/intended curriculum; and classroom enactment.

6.2.2.1 Macro/policy level

Unlike the view in modernist curricula, knowledge is not neutral. Apple (2014, p. xiv) states that the politics of knowledge “is about what knowledge, values and perspectives can be imposed on children in schools”. The link between values and power is strong in value-based curricula like LS[B]E, as some values hold more sway than others. It is for this reason that education planners should not only think of ‘what’ knowledge is of most worth, but also of ‘whose’ knowledge is important in curricula, and what and whose interests’ such knowledge serves, and ‘how’ the curriculum and pedagogy serve (or do not serve) differing interests. As observed in Chapter Five above, the findings at this level show how ideas and discourses that emanate from policies which actors have to work with, become guidelines for political action and serve to justify programmes through arguments which are focused on the interests and necessity of, for example, powerful voices (c.f. Hall, 1993; Schmidt, 2008). It is at this level that some values become more prominent than others, for example conservative moralist views which over-emphasise abstinence; and tensions that exist between espoused values and practices are highlighted, as reported by another study conducted by Munthali, Chimbiri and Zulu (2004).

Education policies are meant to facilitate education (mainly through schools), becoming more responsive. Where conservative policies are in place, there are major effects on the schools and teachers. Schools are sites where overt and hidden curriculum enactment takes place, where all educative experiences within the school are not explicitly included in the official curriculum, for example where the teachers may subconsciously be unaware of their gender biases that may come through their interactions with students. In order to enable more democratic participation in curriculum design, students should have a significant voice in selecting the ‘official’ content. Therefore, it is not just about ‘whose content’ but also ‘who has an influence’ over the selection and organisation of the content. As shown from my fieldwork, students and parents are missing from the voices. Thus, I argue that their inclusion is essential as how the curriculum gets mediated will be affected by how recipients (i.e. students and parents) feel. This concurs with Apple (2014, p. xiii) who states that
conservative governments and state education are often “unwilling to consider the counter-arguments against its [curriculum ideas] use before imposing it on teachers and administrators”, thereby creating competing discourses between policymakers and teachers. However, recognizing the role agency plays, in both reproducing and transforming power (as curriculum outcomes) makes the process of engaging parents, teachers and learners in curriculum development processes a complex and challenging one, given that social, cultural and religious forces can equally shape the curriculum one way or another. It is as a result of this competition that the dominant groups then make decisions to manage the curriculum, including the content they consider to be acceptable, hence unintended consequences at implementation.

As pointed out by Apple (2014), such ideological tensions and conflicts are common where governments have to act to respond to a crisis, e.g., in Malawi, when responding to the high incidences of HIV. Such sentiments are known to occur in the micro-politics of teachers’ interactions with students, and around religious issues, affecting what can and cannot be taught in schools. Because this creates inconsistency in how LS[B]E is delivered, the inequalities that exist within these social contexts are reinforced through hidden curriculum, i.e., where the curriculum seems to benefit some groups (including students) more than others (Barnett and Coate, 2005); thereby suggesting something else is going on beyond what can be seen on the surface in classrooms and textbooks (e.g. promoting abstinence while not directly teaching them to be safe through condom use). In this case, some students are better able to decipher the rules of the hidden curriculum and thus achieve success, but that this hidden curriculum acts as a deliberate form of gate keeping by ensuring that only certain types of students will be able to use it to their advantage. Apple (ibid, p. xviii) refers to this as the “epistemological fog” affecting the dominant groups, who know very little about the lives of poor people.

Ball (1993) has clearly documented the role of social and ideological content, in the context of neoliberal and neoconservative logics and policies, in influencing most of such interventions, i.e., curriculum reforms, and therefore stipulating what can and cannot be done. As observed in the study, while Malawi’s HIV and AIDS initiatives are funded by a large network of organisations, with PEPFAR (through Global Fund) funding most of these programmes which means they have more influencing power as to how the programmes ought to run. In addition, the organisations are linked to each other in
complex but hidden ways from the public view, highlighting the crucial role these relationships play in creating possibilities and constraints for individuals when it comes to developing agency, as agency in this instance can therefore be viewed as the strategic negotiations of an individual to situate oneself and one’s choices in a social context, maintaining relationships and making sense of these experiences. According to Cense (2019, p. 250) “these strategic negotiations take place in a broader social and cultural context which imposes constraints on the agency of all people; however due to structural inequalities some people experience more constraints than others”. Hence, while MoEST advocated for a ‘zero condom’ policy in all its education implementation as they promote abstinence, UNAIDS are authorised (by GoM) to distribute condoms outside schools. However, such funders would normally support services where a ‘gap’ exists which is what helps reinforce the specific ideologies that are being promoted. With the GoM focusing on TaSP as indicated earlier, education initiatives are therefore left to suffer as they get less financial attention than what they would deserve, hence the re-classification of LSE into an elective subject, thereby reducing its hierarchy in terms of importance.

Chapter Four highlights that the main agents/actors range from policy actors to lobbyists to international policy makers. However, it is interesting to note that parents, as well as students (who are the recipients of the LS[B]E curriculum), are not included in the group of those who come up with ideas and discourses relating to how LS[B]E ought to be delivered. This finding resonates with how Pinar (2010) refers to such agents/actors who perceive themselves to be ‘custodians of culture’ seeing children’s education as the responsibility of elders. They are therefore missing out on a great opportunity to involve parents and children, to ensure that the programme itself succeeds. This highlights who gets to promote the dominant views of culture, ideology and science; and who holds minority views (Luke, Woods and Weir, 2012). While it could also be argued here that agency matters, i.e., whose voice matters, the hierarchy of institutions with MoEST at the top of all agents/actors provides them with the background abilities that privilege them. This privilege allows MoEST to say, argue and act without the conscious or unconscious following of consultation rules, hence appropriating the government’s ideas. This is similar to Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of habitus which supports the idea, according to Harmon-Jones and Mills (1999), that people generally act without thinking of rules they may be following but then check
what they are doing against various rules applied.

According to Risse-Kappen (1994) ideas do not float freely as agents need to carry them. Agents however are constituted of individuals who have different interests and values which may not always harmonise, though eventually they have to agree on what the main idea is and what its discourse will be through communication. Actors generate and deliberate about ideas through discursive interactions which may/may not lead to collective action. It is these actors’ background ideational ideas, as observed in Chapter Four above, which have underpinned the ability to make sense of, as well as act within a given meaning context (i.e., ideational rules or rationality). In addition, foreground discursive abilities then enable them to communicate, argue, and deliberate (cf. Schmidt, 2008).

6.1.2.2 Micro/intended curriculum level

At policy level, it was observed in Chapter Four above that while LS[B]E curriculum’s shape may, to some extent, be influenced by the global ‘world model of schooling’, that global model is not always what influences its final shape as policy actors and makers do adapt such transnational frameworks to fit with the Malawian local context, interests, beliefs and values. I observed in this study that at this level, actors are torn between practicality and usefulness, and what has been outlined and tied to specific funding obligations, e.g., funding obligations of PEPFAR and what is ideally needed on the ground to help reduce HIV infections. While the consultation process demonstrated the promotion of democratisation in the discourse and in the deliberations of its stakeholders (with the exclusion of parents and students), the discourse itself also brought to light the domination of an elite, and power relations between these different actors. Such findings are broadly in line with some neo-Marxists and reconceptualists (e.g., Karl Mannheim, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann) (as reported in Schmidt, 2015) who brought an understanding of where different societal forces struggle for dominance. Such observations of power therefore shift the task of curriculum theory from that of deconstruction of educational practices to that of revealing powerful forces and actors who have their own interests. As a consequence, these forces and actors create and uphold unequal practices, re-emphasising inequality in society (cf. Apple, 2014; Pinar et al., 1995; Young, 1971).
Actors’ values are affected by their own background and ideational ideas, i.e., “the values and principles that form the basic assumptions of societal norms” (Wahlström and Sundberg, 2018, p. 165). The actors’ ideas, discourses and actions are their own ways of reacting to what they have to work with and as observed in Chapter Four above, these are affected by the realities which surround and affect them. This can sometimes bring unintended reactions, e.g., through the developed LS[B]E curriculum to ensure that political interests are served (though in theory this could to some extent be resisted), as well as those of communities in which it was to be interpreted, hence the pilot study that took place in 1998. The pilot study process turned a discursive idea that was initially a coordinative discourse into a communicative discourse, in order to legitimise the policy idea.

As observed in Chapter Five above, Mr Chanza and Mr Kadzuwa stood by their Christian values when teaching, unlike most non-state actors as observed in Chapter Three, who were able to gain some form of critical distance from the overall philosophy of moralistic education. Despite these reservations, both teachers espoused strongly held views that LS[B]E is vital in halting further HIV infections thereby accepting the possibility of playing key agentic roles. Similarly, the state officials emphasised the importance of abstinence-based LS[B]E despite data showing that adolescents were engaging in sexual activity at a much younger age (DHS, 2014, 2015, 2016). In a way, this could be perceived to be the influence of what is legitimately seen as appropriate, thereby displaying power being exercised over the individual and therefore, supplanting agency with structure, despite the interchanging roles by the actors, signifying that these were not fixed (though only prominent in limited areas rather than on the whole). This is therefore not surprising as Paechter (1995) states that many of the “wants, values and priorities of decision-making are determined by the structural and historical conditions of our institutions” (p. 47).

As policy level involves a substantive content of ideas, the study observed: the battle for hegemonic control (Blyth, 2002); frames that provided guideposts for knowledge, analysis, persuasion and action through frame-reflective discourse (formation of learning objectives including selection of content and teaching and learning methods) (Rein and Schön, 1994); and narratives or discourses that shaped the understanding of
events (sequencing and assessment). Such foreground discursive abilities at this level enabled state and non-state the actors to think and argue outside their institutions which in a way enabled them to act and reflect critically and act rationally, similar to what Habermas (1989) refers to as communicative action. This discursive action brought the different actors together in their respective roles, creating, deliberating, arguing, bargaining and reaching a consensus as to the final shape of LS[B]E curriculum including its content, teaching, learning and assessment methods.

The study revealed that the policy level is yet another political sphere which is characterised by a communicative discourse between the political actors and the public to legitimise a policy idea (cf. Schmidt, 2006; 2008). It was also noted here that even though the actors did not share the same ideas, values and beliefs, they worked towards promoting a common policy goal of developing a LS[B]E curriculum for teaching and learning. This resonates with what Jobert (2003) refers to as a discourse coalition which, according to Hajer (1993), elucidates the discursive production of reality by groups of policy actors who construct the new social idea or narrative, thereby becoming an epistemic community (Haas, 1992).

6.1.2.3 Classroom level

The study provides fascinating insights into the processes by which teachers engage in curriculum-making in the classroom, demonstrating how the prescribed curriculum is translated into the enacted curriculum, including the day-to-day practices in their classrooms. As observed in Chapter Five above, teachers have to operate in complex contexts where they have to navigate the conflicting demands on their work whiles ensuring students are still learning about HIV and AIDS in their lessons, through the new interactive methods, amidst a tight timetable. Teachers’ espoused views about education are rooted in their prior experiences. Both the iterational and projective aspects of agency impact upon the practical-evaluative curriculum making in which they engage. At classroom level, teachers are finding themselves as co-creators of curriculum (whether they were involved in the development of the curriculum or not).

Classroom practices in the study revealed how teachers’ own personal beliefs and understandings of their vocation influence which areas of LS[B]E curriculum they emphasise. Similarly, Francis (2011) observed in a South African study that some
teachers taught SHE from a series of moral injunctions concerning abstinence, danger, coercion, risk, disease and harm. Teachers often have to operate within tight structural conditions, e.g., in this case, teachers’ performance is also monitored against how many students pass their exams. So, while teachers may want to deliberate on a topic using the learner-centred approaches and fun, they are at the same time constrained by the static timetable and need to complete the syllabus on time. While incorporating learner-centred approaches, especially to cater for different learners, these structures constrain teachers’ ability to include everyone as they only have a specific period of time with large multi-age classrooms. Hence the FGDs in the study indicated there is not sufficient time to learn or complete a task. Of the lessons observed, most were mainly teacher-led, with an emphasis on listening, taking down notes and answering questions by students. The feedback from FGDs emphasized the view that they saw teachers as wanting to get through the lesson content as quickly as possible. This same disjuncture between espoused projections and enacted practice were evidently what Mr Kadzuwa and Chanza had experienced during their teaching through a lack of sufficient time in the timetable, as well as a lack of (teaching and learning) resources, including specialists whom they felt would have perhaps been better at teaching some of the lessons.

However, this is not surprising as it has been asserted by Harley et al. (2000) that the values of teachers are often at odds with what policy tries to achieve. Schools have been seen to be places where, according to Foucault (2000) ‘disciplinary power’ takes place as the institutions need not rely on coercion or punishment in order to enforce behaviour, as the students discipline themselves, thereby further legitimizing what is acceptable or not; thus, discursive practices are shaped through experience. At the same time, policy expectations of teachers create conflicting demands with their personal identities as practitioners (Jansen, 2001). Similarly, through the assessment methods, teachers are well aware of most of the exam content, as they argue that they are fairly predictable from year to year. Teachers here could be seen to be merely positioned as the object of the school’s policy, through the implementation of what is decided elsewhere, subordinate to the cultural ecology of the school. However, the constraints do not undermine completely the possibilities for agency in the enactment of the curriculum; in this case, Mr Kadzuwa’s experience as a teacher, in an area he draws his attention from. So, while his aspirations in curriculum making are influenced by his prior experiences, his repertoire for manouvre is circumscribed by the present
At classroom level, the analysis does not explain why teachers’ pedagogic practices are different though these could also be due to their personal biographies and ambitions, as well as their moral and cultural values. The stark pedagogical differences between Mr Chanza and Kadzuwa, might bring to bear on the same ecology of teaching. Different ambitions to how they became teachers, the iterational differences between them, marked also by their career trajectories, enabled them to engage differentially with ecological culture of the school. The differences in their teaching approaches are significant as Mr Kadzuwa is more relaxed than Chanza, although he also indicates he sets boundaries for students. Chanza enacted a constrained form of agency framed by unsubstantiated projections upon students and a desire to maintain control through a mixture of performance and discipline. He limits his interaction with students and does not move as much as he could in the classroom, whereas Mr Kadzuwa moves around despite the over-crowding, and he asks students how they are getting on with tasks.

This study depicts the schools as contexts where teachers are stifling the independence of the students by giving them limited information through selective teaching and by focusing on abstinence. Unknowingly the teachers are demanding a kind of conformity that goes against the rhetoric of what the curriculum is about. This could be inferred as withholding information from students who are rightly entitled to it. Teachers with Christian roots (as observed in the study) may be compromising other preventative measures that may well prohibit health-seeking behaviours like seeking medical attention when needed, etc. Students in the study at the same time, indicated how conflicted they are between their own [cultural] values and interests which may well contradict with what the schools are telling them. For example, where they have strong Christian beliefs, frank preventative messages may be seen to contradict with their personal values, therefore their personal beliefs inhibit their willingness to listen.

In a study on barriers to SRHE conducted in the southern part of Malawi, Likupe et al. (2020) reported, among other things, teachers’ over-emphasis on abstinence despite acknowledging young people’s active sexual lives. Teachers in the study acknowledged the discomfort which stemmed from a conflict point between their personal and religious beliefs and community expectations. Similarly, in a study conducted by
DePalma and Francis (2014) on South African teachers’ perspectives on abstinence and safe education, it was concluded that in order for teachers to balance their contradictory positions, they could strategically combine both abstinence and safe sex education to promote a comprehensive sexuality education, building a sense of agency and responsibility without disadvantaging students through moralism. As such teachers are often stuck between the competing values of the policy, the community, and their personal ones (Jansen, 2001). However, Ngwena (2003, p. 200) points out that “the aim should not be to indoctrinate or to convey disrespect for parental religious and philosophical convictions. Rather it must be to impart the information essential for the protection and health of learners in the knowledge that parents, religious leaders and healthcare practitioners may lack the capacity or inclination to discuss sexuality and sexual matters”. Masinga (2007; 2009) and Archer (2010) recommends self-reflexivity during training where teachers are encouraged to acknowledge their own prejudices and identify their values and beliefs as separate from what they are expected to teach.

In addition, teachers in the study also had to balance the parents’ expectations as they have been known to resist their children taking SHE lessons. Studies (Mayeza, 2018) have been reported parents’ criticisms of SE deriving from a discourse of childhood-as-innocence which displaces sexuality from childhood and positions it within adulthood; this suggests they perceive that their children are being encouraged to be sexually active. Students in the study also reported perceiving teachers as authority figures as they are the ones issuing instruction at all times. According to Dixon (2011) this reinforces teacher authority and produces docility on the part of learners. Also, DePalma and Francis (2014) in a study of teachers in South Africa reported that teachers feared parental reaction more than the authorities.

Teachers’ practices are also shaped by the incentives made available to them, the training they receive and the expectations of the communities in which they serve. Francis (2011) conducted a desk-based study of contradictory teacher values in SE in South Africa when he reported that the disjuncture between policy and practice is exacerbated by uncertainty and a lack of training. Likupe at al. (2020) similarly point out to a mismatch between programme objectives (which often emphasise abstinence) and the socio-cultural context in which such education takes place. Several studies (Mitchell, Walsh and Larkin, 2004; Walsh, Mitchell and Smith, 2002) report that where
teachers view students as ‘knowers’, or as legitimate sexual subjects (Allen, 2005; 2009) they are most likely to employ interactive teaching methods, thereby encouraging participatory learning. However, those teachers who are more concerned with instilling moral values and behaviour, are more likely to use traditional didactic methods. In another study conducted by Mukoma et al. (2009) it was found that teachers who lacked the conceptual understanding of what they were meant to teach struggled to use learner-centred methods, as well as facing challenges such as large class sizes with multi-age students and having to manage the classroom.

My study of classroom practice reveals that students generally respond to teachers only after a teacher initiates the conversation, rather than the other way round. Classroom practice reveals how student and teacher engagement is shaped by teacher actions and pedagogy. One of the barriers highlighted in the southern Malawi study by Likupe et al. was on teachers’ inadequate training; which forces teachers to only focus on areas where they feel confident in. Similarly, in a South African study on teacher experiences of teaching HIV and SHE as part of LO, Helleve et al. (2011, p. 18) reported that teachers were “particularly concerned about how to avoid laughter, jokes, swear words referring to sex and sexuality, taboos, inappropriate comments and slang expressions from learners”. Daria and Campbell (2004, p. 2) indicate that “if adolescents perceive a teacher as being personally and professionally unprepared, pandemonium and tumultuous discussions may occur”. It is important to ensure that teachers who are properly trained specifically for LS[E] should be allocated to teach it rather than allocating teachers based on which subjects lack teachers. As this study shows, only one of the two teachers teaching LS[E] was specifically trained to teach LSE.

Students’ data reveals a disjuncture between what they learn about HIV and AIDS at school and their understanding and knowledge from home and community. Similarly, South Africa’s LO is also seen as detached from students’ worlds, interests, and concerns (Mthatyana and Vincent, 2015). My study revealed that students’ personal experiences were not necessarily taken into account in the classroom. Students’ everyday experiences of oppression, of being silenced or having their cultures and voices excluded from curricula and decision making need to be examined for ideological messages that are contained in such acts. The myriad components of the social and political context in which students operate in include cultural beliefs; policies; rights and
rules, such as LGBT rights, abortion; the educational system; social and gender norms; and family roles and expectations. Heteronormativity and the sexual double standards regarding behaviour of men and women still prevail. In addition, young people have to negotiate multiple normative spaces at home, at school and among peers, both on- and off-line (Cense, 2019). The religious and cultural groups in Malawi espouse divergent discourses on sexuality hence the shape of LS[B]E. Specifically, ensuring that such judgements do not exclude any learners especially those that have familial affection and may have the school as their only source of information. Understanding of these interwoven components as well as the lived experiences that students bring to the pedagogical encounter, while working with relevant organisations will help develop a curriculum that is meaningful and therefore not perceived as domineering and reproducing social inequality and obstructing the possibility of claiming agency. Teachers on the other hand, need to transform the students’ experience of being dominated, and instead empower them to become emancipated in a full democracy. Teachers can help students, especially those who already come from conservative religious backgrounds, through role play for instance, so this becomes embodied knowledge, which will help students avoid becoming products of neoconservative ideologies. For instance, Boal (2000) speaks of Theatre of the Oppressed, where embodied practices explore power and relevance of ideas of invisible power, embodied cognition and civic education. In this instance, learners’ experiences inform what is to be included in the role play, with role reversals so each learner experiences the power rather than an abstract telling. Such an approach would also facilitate those topics that would be perceived as very sensitive, which may be avoided altogether by the (shy and/or not confident) teachers.

6.3 Recommendations – areas of future research

A well-articulated educational philosophy related to the wider purposes of education is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the sorts of agency that might enrich or challenge the official discourses in the education sector. It was evident that LS[B]E curriculum development (just as any other), is a complex process, as asserted by Flinders and Thornton (2013) where the distribution of power, though appearing to be fixed, is formed by a network of heterogenous contributors, all of whom have agency, some of which can be seen validly as agency in opposition to policy. The differences between the desired and enacted curriculum would seem to over-simplify what is a complex
situation, where agency of the teacher to teach as they wish is circumscribed in various ways by the context under which they teach. Additionally, fidelity to policy intentions is highly problematic given the wide variety of ecological factors that potentially impact on such translations. The critical scrutiny of power structures and relations shows that they are far from static or stable. Bernstein (2000) stresses that power structures are rather contested and negotiated in the relations of pedagogic communication, while Bourdieu (1984) sees power as the social boundaries that enable and constrain all actors. McLaren (1995) and Leistyna, Woodrum and Sherblom (1996) argue that power is a central, defining concept in curriculum development, with considerable importance accorded to the political agenda of the curriculum, and that the empowerment of individuals and societies is an inescapable consideration in the curriculum. The new perspectives on the symbolic control of the ‘what’ (ideas), the ‘who’ (actors), and the ‘where’ (arenas) need to be addressed and explored. This study was an attempt to contribute to such work.

While there is increasing pressure the youth of today to be prepared for 21CS, it is also important to understand that the universality of concepts freedom and equality are nuanced as to what their connotations are and how these would practically and realistically fit within different contexts. Studies (as reported by Apple, 2014) suggest a new hegemonic bloc of conservative modernisation where new alliances are created and maintained to ensure that policy and practice are not simply considered as technical issues, but as processes that are inherently political and evaluative, as there are competing interests. Questions of ethics and social justice all need to be connected to larger social contexts where these ideas are realised, underpinned, and experienced.

The study also creates implications for implementing LS[B]E curriculum, especially in cases where SRGBV takes place. It should be part of the policy that the existence of SRGBV should be acknowledged and embedded in education, especially where violence is normalized, e.g., through authoritarian pedagogy which strengthens unequal between teachers and students, and boys and girls through sexualized bullying, sexual harassment, or sexual coercion for higher grades, or through male aggression. According to Leach, Dunne and Salvi (2014), ignoring these undermines the potential for schools to provide children with the knowledge and skills to deal with such violent behaviour let alone protect them from further HIV transmissions.
The study has two main recommendations. The first recommendation is that policymakers and practitioners pay attention to the views of teachers and students in developing any future LS[B]E curricula as their experiences and practice do mediate how the curriculum is realised. While the curriculum has also been viewed alongside the social environment, there is still need for curriculum developers to explore further the interactions between the contributors (rather than just seeing them as individuals with their own interests). These interactions all exist in a seamless web where boundaries are arbitrary and where interactions are juxtaposed components. Equally as has been observed in Chapters Four and Five, the LS[B]E curriculum developers all play various roles within the entire process. There is need for these roles to be more transparent, i.e., that the curriculum writers move fluidly between the different roles of curriculum designer, textbook writer or even a teacher while politically steering what legitimate knowledge to be included in the curriculum.

With regard to implementation, the study also recommends that for any educational policy that requires changes to social practices to teaching, needs to be designed to be more flexible, taking into account teacher agency, and especially teachers’ proactive and projective engagement with the policy in question. This in turn then allows scope for further research and theorizing of how agency is achieved in schools, and into how the potential for teacher and student agency in curriculum making specifically for educational purposes might be enhanced. A recognition of how personal teacher beliefs affect how they teach would help understand how the teachers ought to be prepared and supported. This would help to ensure that teachers feel empowered enough to interact more with learners, thereby transforming teacher and learner practices for positive uptake. Secondly, a recommendation is made for education researchers to undertake a larger study in an urban conventional secondary school context, to explore at national level whether there are any similarities in how the LS[B]E curriculum is enacted in such settings.

Agency in curriculum change can be “characterized as a negotiation process or relationship between different structures that constrain or enable agency” (c.f. Ashwin, 2009, p.20) with different structures, i.e., institutional, community and individuals. This is why they should all be considered when reviewing agency. With Malawi’s education
being decentralized, it is worth recognizing that the application of the above recommendations may not be as straightforward as one would hope, as engaging a range of interested parties might not necessarily be the simple solution to include all stakeholders’ input. The general perception around decentralization is that it still remains limited due to structural issues around decision-making, as Chirwa (2012 p. 21-22) points out that “decentralization laws in Malawi do not provide any policy, planning or budgeting role for lower local government and decentralization structures.” Both recommendations acknowledge such challenges, and therefore recognize the impactful roles of community mobilization and community participation, as acknowledged by Parkhurst (2012), which Campbell (2010) speaks of “competent communities” that depend to a large extent facilitate “programmes and processes that serve to buffer or ameliorate the impacts of social inequalities on people’s health” (p. 21); though it is worth acknowledging that such approaches could equally be complex and reproduce conservative values. The complexities of such approaches are also evident in Foucault’s (2000) reconceptualizing of power that actors use as an instrument of coercion, and even away from the structures in which those actors operate, meaning that power is everywhere and coming from multiple directions, with resistance in some ways be it upward or downward. Therefore, power here is an expression of agency but wielded by those who have it over those who do not.

The role of communities, groups and networks in South Africa (Johnson et al., 2012), Malawi (Smith and Watkins, 2005) and Uganda (Hallett et al., 2006) has been shown to have impact on HIV prevention. MoEST could therefore consider the role of such organisations such as the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association (MIAA), Malawi Network of AIDS Service Organisations (MANASO), and MANET+. Of particular interest to target in this case would perhaps be organisations such as Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CRECCOM) and Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC), who could potentially facilitate the bottom-up approaches to future curriculum development.

CRECCOM, for instance, uses the Social Mobilisation Campaign Model, which is an approach used to mobilise and empower rural communities to fully own their development. This model uses a combination of participatory methodologies, rights-based approaches, results-based management, collective action, and policy advocacy
tools to enhance individual capabilities. CRECCOM is well known for its implementation of community mobilisation interventions in areas of HIV/AIDS, education, gender and women empowerment and climate change resilience. CRECCOM has, and continues to have good relationships with traditional leaders, who are at the core of influencing communities, government departments, and donors. For instance, their project of Improving Education Quality in Community Day Secondary Schools (IEQ-CDSS) (funded by Open Society Foundation) in Thyolo is showing improvements in student performance as well as teaching quality and classroom interactions as teachers are also taught gender responsive strategies for active participation.

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CSEC, whose core values centre around transparency and accountability; respect for human rights and rule of law; integrity; and gender equality, is an alliance NGO. This alliance comprises of 82 diverse and independent voluntary organisations from the following sectors: NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, trade unions, FBOs, and research centres. CSEC promotes the right to quality education in Malawi, and through their recent programme on Empowering Girls Through Education and Health (ASPIRE) (funded by USAID) aims at increasing the educational attainment for girls on primary and secondary schools in the southern part of Malawi.

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Since LS[B]E demands a learner-centred approach, working with NGOs like Theatre for A Change (TfaC), whose approach to behaviour and policy change focuses on working within government and community structures to build the capacity of professionals on a long-term, sustainable basis. Their approach of training teachers, among other professionals, early in their careers helps equip them with the skills to be agents of change. TfaC uses a unique combination of drama and participatory learning to help vulnerable women and girls build their confidence and find their voice. Some of their current approaches include behaviour change in SRHR, interactive theatre for behaviour change, interactive theater for justice, legislative theatre, interactive radio drama, and participatory approaches to M&E.

TfaC began in Ghana in 2003 and expanded into 11 other countries including Malawi (in 2007) with two main objectives of increasing impact; and scaling up global impact by creating partnerships with selected international organisations. TfaC Malawi focuses on changing the lives of women and girls through an FCDO-funded project, Leave No Girl
Behind, which focuses on enabling the most marginalised girls in Malawi to get into school and to have awareness and empowerment in their SRH; and a GIZ-funded project, focusing on reducing sexual and gender-based violence in the southern part of Malawi. Between 2019/20 there were 622 pr-service teachers were trained at teacher training colleges, 90% of whom demonstrated SRHR knowledge, attitude and skills.

6.4 Conclusion

Malawi’s framing of SRHE through LS[B]E is commendable, as it is concerned with adolescent rights so they are able to control their own destiny and improve their lives; though it is to some extent being poorly implemented; this is due to structural limitations, and personal inhibitions affecting how the curriculum is interpreted. However, as observed by Underwood et al. (2011), Goldman (2012), Cluver et al. (2013), and Browes (2015) such curriculum should go beyond the individual to include society by addressing safer sexual practices as well as contextual issues such as gender inequality and poverty, with emphasis on girls’ rights to opportunities being equal to those of boys no matter how SRHE is delivered.

Malawi’s LS[B]E curriculum appears to be heavy on the technical and hermeneutic interests and very light on the emancipatory interest and this (either deliberately or as a side-effect) supports – if not contributes to – the reproduction of social inequality (Morisson, 1995), through implicit learning where certain norms, values and social relations are concealed and often remain in the obvious dimensions of school life (Hernandez, 2003). The study has highlighted the importance of a critical understanding of power, in this case, a form of agency through invisible power, which is intentionally used by MoEST and faith-based philosophies to manipulate those with less power, thereby legitimizing what is acceptable LS[B]E thereby normalizing these for everyone (whether powerful or not). This is equally supported by Foucault (2000) who sees power as ‘ubiquitous’ and transcending agency and structure; and Bourdieu (1984) who sees power as a cultural and symbolic creation – they both agree that power is constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure. While the theoretical contributions to curriculum and curriculum development appear to be more descriptive in this study, it is rare that they would reach the level of normative curriculum theorising let alone initiating profound change. This study took place in between two different curricula and while it focused on the old curriculum, it would be interesting to note what changes would have been made in the new curriculum in relation to the
recommendations made in this study since preliminary findings of this study were shared with MoEST. In addition, this study could possibly claim instrumental changes as the research coincided with the LS[B]E curriculum review which was to some extent prompted by my study findings. As much as this study could not report on that in more detail, it is a potential impact area as it was influenced by questions and reflections which my study raised during my data collection phases.

Essentialist education, as agreed by Acquah, Adjei and Mensah (2017) aims to equip students with a common core of or “basic” information and skills needed for the promotion of citizenship. It is for this reason, that essentialists believe that students should master “the essentials” before they are to study other less essential material that is possibly more interesting to them. The issues of ‘what’ should be learnt and ‘how’ it should be organised for teaching and learning has always been political between theorists (who neglect design), designers (who neglect theory), and teachers (who implement the curriculum). However, these differences between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ eventually get resolved in a consensus manner through the design process as has been observed in this study.

Beyer and Apple (1988), Eisner (1979), and Schubert (1986) assert that curriculum shapes provide qualities and powers of experience and knowledge as judgements have to be made about whose knowledge counts and whose skills matter. As such curriculum shapes are seen to be selected for their powers in bolstering political causes and conferring political status. It is therefore fair to state that there are no generic or neutral theoretical orientations for how curriculum is then organised. Given there might be a perceived gap between what the intention of the curriculum is and how it gets implemented (as asserted by Schulte, 2018), contextual, structural and attitudinal factors also play a role in how the curriculum is then adapted and enacted.

My study has shown the importance of involving all relevant actors when undertaking curriculum reforms. Ideally subject experts as well as teachers, students and parents should be involved in shaping the curriculum. There is no point in developing a good curriculum that may not be implemented fully at classroom level should it be rejected by teachers and students as well as the communities it is meant to serve. It is therefore important to bear in mind that no matter how well-designed a curriculum may be, it
does get impacted at classroom level by the teachers’ beliefs and values as well as how they use teaching and learning materials and by how they interact with the students. While the study focused on two teachers, one of whom was not originally trained to teach LSE, a teacher’s willingness to take a subject on is quite critical to its successful implementation. Students themselves on the other hand, have also shown that they have far more access to other sources of information (with rare cases where parents have provided the information) than the information provided in the classroom. As there are restrictions at classroom level as to how the curriculum is implemented, e.g., limitation to the amount of information they can get from the school, students do not engage as much as they would since they find the information presented to them redundant. LSE could be significant in dispelling any misleading and inaccurate information young people acquire from elsewhere. It is therefore key to ensure that there are connections between the society and the school contexts so that students can be incentivised to listen in the classroom while also trying to apply what they learn in their everyday lives.

Agency, culture and structure are intertwined and deeply influence each other. Actors’ embodied experiences and the perceived reality around them is not static nor true to their understanding through curricula, values, beliefs, ideas and principles in relation to learning, understanding, knowledge, disciplinary, individuality and society are realized. Curriculum does reflect the social context in which it is located; it is created within a wider social order and, as such, an understanding of the curriculum cannot easily be accomplished without recognition of the social world in which it has been shaped, e.g., creating a curriculum while ignoring structural drivers of HIV. Engaging with Malawian NGOs already working in the area would possibly allow all actors to express and mobilise their agency to create countervailing power that might critically reshape curriculum and its implementation. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, there are not many empirical studies that are specifically linked to LSE curriculum reforms. As argued by Dickinson and Buse (2008), there are not enough HIV and AIDS policymaking studies carried out in LMICs as they fail to tackle interests that underpin actors’ behaviour and policy decisions. My study has clearly contributed to filling this gap on understanding curriculum development for LSE in LMICs like Malawi.
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### Appendices

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Social Sciences & Arts Cross-School Research Ethics Committee

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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<tr>
<th>Reference Number:</th>
<th>ER/WIM20/1</th>
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<tr>
<td>School:</td>
<td>ESW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title of Project</td>
<td>Understanding HIV Education in a Developing Country Context: A critical analysis of life skills based HIV curriculum in one Malawian junior secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator/Supervisor:</td>
<td>Wezi Mwangulube/Sayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Start Date:</td>
<td>09/09/2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences/Arts Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to research proposal - Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events - Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.

Authorised Signature

Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)

Professor Stephen Shute 11/09/2013
Ms Wezi Mwangulube,
20 Forge Close
Portslade
East Sussex
BN41 2GP

Dear Ms Wezi Mwangulube

REQUEST TO CONDUCT PhD RESEARCH STUDY IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

I refer to your letter dated 25th September 2013, seeking the ministry’s approval for you to conduct a research study on ‘Understanding HIV Education in a developing country context: a critical analysis of life skills based HIV curriculum in on Malawian Junior Secondary School’, as part of your PhD studies.

I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has granted you an approval to conduct the research study in Lilongwe district as specified in your letter.

Yours sincerely,

Victor Lungu

For: SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Appendix 3: Information sheet and consent form for state and non-state participants

You have been invited to participate voluntarily in this interview which seeks to explore what are the processes related to the construction and practices of HIV education curriculum amongst school going children in Malawi. The title of the research is ‘Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LSBE) in Malawi’. I understand that this research is being conducted by Wezi Mwangulube, a student at the University of Sussex, as part of her PhD research. Please, take time to read the following information carefully.

Purpose of Research
This research aims to examine and interrogate the social construction of knowledge and curricula on HIV by looking at how life skills-based HIV curriculum (also referred to as LSBE) is delivered in one Malawian junior secondary school. Please, note that this research will not, in any way attempt to look at the extent education has contributed to HIV prevention but rather it will focus on how HIV based education is implemented.

In order to achieve this aim, the following objectives have been set:

i. To determine how LSBE is being implemented across one Malawian junior secondary school

ii. Whether the set learning objectives and outcomes of LSBE are being met or not

iii. To identify any hindrances in implementing LSBE; and

iv. To identify recommendations on how the implementation of LSBE can be improved

I understand that the research methods which may involve me are:

1. Wezi’s recorded observations of my conversation with her and/or

2. My voluntary participation by taking part in an interview from her interview guide and/or

3. My voluntary participation in the said interview which should take not longer than an hour/session.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been asked to be part of this study because you are one of the participants that are relevant for this research as it seeks to understand how LSBE is implemented at junior secondary school level. Your role and involvement at policy level (through the development of the said curriculum/playing a key role in implementing LSBE) has placed you in a strategic place to be part of my sample.

This study aims to have a total number of 104 participants, i.e. 80 student participants, 8 teacher participants, 10 policy maker participants and 6 PTA member participants. You are therefore in a good position to discuss what your opinions on LSBE curriculum are.
Do I have to take part?
This is voluntary and it is up to you to take part in this interview or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will also be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are also free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Also note that a decision to withdraw or not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

What will happen to me if I do decide to take part?
If you decide to take part, you will be invited to attend an individual interview during which you will be asked questions based on an interview guide. This interview will be conducted in a location and a time that will be agreed upon prior to the interview commencing. The interview will not last more than an hour and will be recorded for Wezi’s use only (using a recorder and through note-taking) and this information will be used in assisting with the data analysis that will be used for the final research dissertation to the Tutors at Sussex University. This information will be stored on a lockable computer and will only be accessible with the use of a password.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
You will not be identified by name and any identifiable information in regards to names and/or agency name will be kept strictly confidential in the above-mentioned research report. During interviews, your privacy and ability to talk freely without being overheard will be ensured, and during the collection, storage and publication of data, names will be anonymised. All participants must agree to treat anything discussed within research spaces as completely confidential.

What if I don’t take part?
You are of course free to choose not to take part in the study and this will have no effect on whether you can attend any future research in this area. If you do agree to take part, you can choose how long you wish to take part, from just one section of the study or for the length of the research. You can choose to stop being in the study at any time and this will have no effect on your participation in the school or your education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
There are no anticipated risks or disadvantages by your participating in this research as all confidential details will not be used to identify you in any materials produced as a consequence of your interview. As an assurance, any quotes that will be reproduced will be attributed to official names rather than titles, so for instance instead of stating ‘HIV Curriculum Development Officer’, reference will generally be made as ‘Government Official/Policy Maker’.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please discuss these with Wezi Mwangulube. Once you indicate that you are interested in participating in the study, you will be provided with a consent form in order to confirm that you are willing to take part and this consent can be withdrawn at any time during the study.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed by the Social Sciences and Arts Cross-Schools Ethics Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The data will be collected over a period of time over different stakeholders. A summary of the key findings will be incorporated into a final report with key recommendations which will be emphasised within the same report. Once this report has been reviewed by a board of faculty
members, it shall enter the public domain. A summarised report of the findings will be sent to the Ministry of Education and yourselves.

What if something goes wrong?
If you are not satisfied with the interview, you can leave at any time without giving any reason. If there are any questions, complaints or concerns, you can contact Wezi’s supervisor Dr Yusuf Sayed, Reader in International Education, School of Education and Social Work, Essex House, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, BN1 9RE or at (y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk).

Contact Details for Further Information
If you require contact for further information please contact the following:
Wezi Mwangulube at: wim20@sussex.ac.uk
Yusuf Sayed: y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Signed by Research Participant

______________________________________
Date:

______________________________________

You are encouraged to keep a copy of this sheet for your information.
CONSENT FORM for state and non-state actors

Research Title: Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[B]E) in Malawi

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research process.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I understand that the researcher will be carrying out observations within the school, and I give my consent to the use of anonymized data collected during these observations which relate to me.

5. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

6. I agree to the use of anonymized quotes in the report from this research.

7. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant Name: ________________________________
Date: _______________ Signature: ____________________
Researcher Name: ________________________________
Date: _______________ Signature: ____________________

Please tick box
Yes  □  No □
You have been invited to participate in this research voluntarily (through your full/part participation in completing a questionnaire, being part of a Focus Group Discussion, interviews and Classroom Observations), i.e. you are not obliged to take part in all or some of the methods in this research even if your parents have agreed to you taking part should you not wish to participate. Please, bear in mind that you will not be penalised or discriminated against should you not wish to participate in the research. The title of the research is ‘Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LSBE) in Malawi’. I understand that this research is being conducted by Wezi Mwangulube as part of her PhD research. Please, take time to read the following information carefully.

**Purpose of Research**

This research aims to examine and interrogate how LSBE curriculum for junior secondary school is developed and implemented at classroom level. Please, note that this research will not, in any way attempt to look at the extent education has contributed to HIV prevention but rather it will focus on how HIV based education is implemented.

Most past research on LSBE has focused on whether this is implemented in all schools or not and little attention has been paid to how the curriculum itself is developed or how it is implemented at classroom level. Hopefully, Wezi’s research will explore these areas more and will hopefully contribute to the improvement of future developments and implementations.

I understand that my participation in the research (in addition to the data collection methods above) may involve:

1. Wezi’s recorded observations of my conversation with her and/or;

2. My voluntary participation of responding to questionnaires, being part of an FGD, being observed in the classroom and being interviewed;

3. My voluntary participation in the said data collection methods in the school environment where an adult is present which should take no longer than an hour/session.

**Why have I been invited to participate?**

You have been asked to be part of this study because you are in one of the participant groups that are relevant for this research as it seeks to understand how LSBE is implemented at junior secondary school level. Because you are in Form 1/Form 2, you are best placed to contribute to this research.

This study aims to have a total number of 104 participants, i.e. 80 student participants, 8 teacher participants, 10 policy maker participants and 6 PTA member participants. You are therefore in
a good position to discuss what your opinions on LSBE curriculum development and
implementation are.

Do I have to take part?
This is voluntary and it is up to you to take part in this interview or not. If you do decide to take
part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will also be asked to sign a consent
form. If you decide not to take part, you are also free to withdraw at any time at any given time
without giving any reason. Also note that a decision to withdraw or not to take part, will not
affect you in any way.

What will happen to me if I do decide to take part?
Your parents/carer will first be approached for their permission for you to participate. Where
parents do not want their children to be involved in the study, they have been asked to send in
an opt Out Form which will be given to Wezi by your parents/carer. You will be invited to
complete a questionnaire, attend focus group discussions with your peers and an individual
interview within the school environment with the permission of the headteacher. You will also
be part of classroom observations that will take place at the school within school hours. This
interview will be conducted at a time that will be agreed upon prior to the interview
commencing. Each focus group discussion, interview and classroom observation will not last
more than an hour and will be recorded for Wezi’s use only (using a recorder and through note-
taking) and this information will be used in assisting with the data analysis that will be used for
the final research dissertation to the Tutors at Sussex University. This information will be stored
on a lockable computer and will only be accessible with the use of a password.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
You will not be identified by name and any identifiable information in regards to names and/or
agency name will be kept strictly confidential in the above-mentioned research report. During
interviews, your privacy and ability to talk freely without being overheard will be ensured, and
during the collection, storage and publication of data, names will be anonymised. During focus
group discussions, ‘ground rules’ will be established to ensure that all participants understand
the importance of respecting each other’s privacy; all participants must agree to treat anything
discussed within research spaces as completely confidential.

What if I don’t take part?
Even though your parents give consent for you to take part in the study, you are under no
obligation to be part of the study. You are of course free to choose not to take part in the study
and this have no effect on whether you can attend any future research in this area. If you do
agree to take part, you can choose how long you wish to take part, from just one section of the
study or for the length of the research. You can choose to stop being in the study at any time
and this will have no effect on your participation in the school or your education.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?
There are no anticipated risks or disadvantages by your participating in this research as all
confidential details will not be used to identify you in any materials produced as a consequence
of your interview. As an assurance, any quotes that will be reproduced will be generalised and
will therefore not be linked to any particular student.

What should I do if I want to take part?
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please discuss these with Wezi
Mwangulube. Once you indicate that you are interested in participating in the study, you will
be provided with a consent form in order to confirm that you are willing to take part and this
consent can be withdrawn at any time during the study.
Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed by the Social Sciences and Arts Cross-Schools Ethics Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The data will be collected over a period of time over different stakeholders. A summary of the key findings will be incorporated into a final report with key recommendations which will be emphasised within the same report. Once this report has been reviewed by a board of faculty members, it shall enter the public domain. A summarised report of the findings will be made available to the Ministry of Education and your school.

What if something goes wrong?
If you are not satisfied with the interview, you can leave at any time without giving any reason. If there are any questions, complaints or concerns, you can contact Wezi’s supervisor Dr Yusuf Sayed, Reader in international Education, School of Education and Social Work, Essex House, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK, BN1 9RE or at (y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk).

Contact Details for Further Information
If you require contact for further information please contact the following:
Wezi Mwangulube at: wim20@sussex.ac.uk
Yusuf Sayed: y.sayed@sussex.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Signed by Research Participant

______________________________
Date:
______________________________

You are encouraged to keep a copy of this sheet for your information.
CONSENT FORM for students

Research Title: Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[B]E) in Malawi

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research process.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I understand that the researcher will be carrying out observations within the school, and I give my consent to the use of anonymized data collected during these observations which relate to me.

5. I agree to the interview/focus group discussion being audio recorded.

6. I agree to the use of anonymized quotes in the report from this research.

7. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant Name: ________________________________
Date: _______________ Signature: ____________________

Researcher Name: ________________________________
Date: _______________ Signature: ____________________
Appendix 5: Individual interview guide (Elites)

**Introduction**

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself – like why you decided to get involved in the education sector (refer to their specific role)?
2. What is your educational background and what is your expertise area?
3. Tell me why you think HIV/AIDS is a problem and why it must be addressed now?
4. Tell me about your experience in your current role and how you got involved with HIV and AIDS Education?

**Understanding of the different actors on the development, and content selection of HIV and AIDS Education**

1. Why did HIV and AIDS Education become part of the national curriculum?
2. How does the current HIV and AIDS Education differ from previous sexual reproductive health education?
3. Who are the actors involved in the shaping and development of HIV and AIDS Education? How do these get selected to take part in developing the said curriculum?
4. How are topics selected for inclusion into the HIV and AIDS Education?
5. What do you personally feel about the consultation process of developing HIV and AIDS Education?
6. How complementary is the HIV and AIDS Education curriculum to other out of school activities and/or programmes?
7. Has the current HIV and AIDS Education been changed since it was originally developed?

**Teaching and learning approaches to HIV and AIDS Education**

1. HIV and AIDS Education demands a different type of teaching and learning. What are your expectations of teachers and students around these new methods?
2. What teaching and learning resources and materials are available for HIV and AIDS Education?
3. Is there any additional support that teachers get for their training around HIV and AIDS Education as part of their ongoing staff development? If so, how often is this and how long are the trainings for?
4. How are schools monitored to ensure the teaching and learning is appropriate and any teething problems addressed to improve the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS Education?
5. What assessment methods are used and adopted by teachers at classroom level to ensure students acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills expected?

**Concluding/Other**

1. In your opinion, what would an ideal HIV and AIDS Education look like? Are there any aspects that you would like changed / added to the existing curriculum?
2. Is there any additional information that you would like to add about HIV and AIDS Education that has not been covered in the questions above, or is there anything that you would like to add that would be useful for this research?
3. Why did you decide to take part of this research?
4. Any other final comments?
**Appendix 6: Individual interview guides for (Head, Deputy, and Welfare) teachers**

**Introduction**

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself – like why you decided to get involved in the education sector (refer to their specific role)?
2. What is your educational background and what is your expertise area?
3. Tell me why you think HIV/AIDS is a problem and why it must be addressed now.
4. Tell me about your experience in your current role and how you got involved with HIV and AIDS Education?

**Teaching and learning and support (only valid for headteacher and deputy headteacher)**

1. What training is provided for the HIV and AIDS Education teachers as part of their support?
2. Is the school in any position to organise their own additional HIV and AIDS Education training, especially where the MoEST is unable to provide the resources?
3. How do you ensure the HIV and AIDS Education teachers have all the resources they need in order to be able to teach effectively and efficiently?
4. How are teachers supported in their roles so that they can teach the students accordingly and appropriately?
5. What monitoring systems are in place to support the teachers when teaching to ensure they are using the appropriate resources and materials?
6. What other curricular activities addressing HIV and AIDS Education are available for students other than the national curriculum?
7. How do you discipline students who are problematic in the school?
8. What teaching and learning challenges have you come across at this school and how do you deal with them?

**Teacher support (valid for all teachers)**

9. Have the HIV and AIDS Education teachers come to you with specific problems students have brought up in the classroom? If so, how have you dealt with these?
10. How do you deal with cases where students come to see you because of something that has come up from their HIV and AIDS Education lessons?
11. What referral system is in the school should students come and report needing support?

**Concluding/Other**

1. In your opinion, what would an ideal HIV and AIDS Education look like? Are there any aspects that you would like changed / added to the existing curriculum?
2. What cultural practices are common in this area? And are these disruptive to your normal day at school or not?
3. Is there any additional information that you would like to add about HIV and AIDS Education that has not been covered in the questions above, or is there anything that you would like to add that would be useful for this research?
4. Any other final comments?
Appendix 7: Individual interview guide for LS[B]E teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself – like why you decided to get involved in the education sector (refer to their specific role)?  
2. What is your educational background and what is your expertise area?  
3. Tell me about any challenges you face in your role as a teacher in general and how you deal with these challenges. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What training have you received to prepare you as a teacher?  
2. Is there any additional support that you and other teachers get for HIV and AIDS Education as part of your ongoing staff development? If so, how often is this and how long are the trainings for?  
3. Do you feel supported in your role as a teacher of HIV and AIDS Education – whether by colleagues, school or elsewhere? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and learning approaches for HIV and AIDS Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How does the current HIV and AIDS Education differ from previous sexual reproductive health education?  
2. HIV and AIDS demands a different type of teaching and learning. How will you incorporate these in your teaching?  
3. What are some of the successes you enjoy and challenges you face in your role as a teacher of HIV and AIDS Education?  
4. What resources and materials do you use for teaching HIV and AIDS Education?  
5. How do you incorporate learners’ home experiences and what they learn in the classroom?  
6. Past reports have claimed the difficulty teachers have with teaching sensitive sexual reproductive health questions that students might ask in the classroom. What is your experience and how do you deal with such questions in the classroom?  
7. How do you prepare for specific HIV and AIDS lessons prior to teaching?  
8. What mechanisms do you use to ensure all students are included in HIV and AIDS specific lessons – more so those that are timid and would shy away from participating?  
9. What preventative methods do you teach about in HIV and AIDS Education lessons and why?  
10. What assessment methods do you use to assess if students have acquired the expected knowledge and skills? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concluding/Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What other external HIV and AIDS Education trainings have you attended that have not been delivered by the MoEST?  
2. In your opinion, what would an ideal HIV and AIDS Education look like? Are there any aspects that you would like changed / added to the existing curriculum?  
3. What cultural practices are common in this area? And are these disruptive to your normal day at school or not?  
4. Is there any additional information that you would like to add about HIV and AIDS Education that has not been covered in the questions above, or is there anything that you would like to add that would be useful for this research?  
5. Any other final comments? |
Appendix 8: Individual interview guide for students

1. Who do you live with at home (if they have siblings at home, ask what the siblings do)?
2. What is your understanding of HIV and AIDS?
3. Why do you think youth like yourself need to learn about HIV and AIDS?
4. What do you think of the preventative methods (i.e. preventative measure of A(bstinence), B(eing faithful) and C(ondomize) that are being promoted in the school?
5. Does the school provide enough information or not on HIV and AIDS? Please, elaborate.
6. Apart from school, what are your other sources of HIV and AIDS information? How do you access these (if they haven’t stated already)?
7. Can you tell me about some of the first/early experiences you have had that you/friends would describe as sexual?
8. Have you/friends had any good/bad sexual experiences? Can you tell me about this/these?
9. Have you been able to apply the knowledge that you have gained in HIV and AIDS Education outside of school?
10. What opportunities exist for you to include any of your own experiences while learning HIV and AIDS Education in the classroom?
11. What are the differences that you have noticed so far between what the HIV and AIDS Education presents and the personal experiences that you bring into the classroom?
12. Are you aware of any health services in your area should you/your friends need to use them?
13. What type of learning environment would you expect for HIV and AIDS specific topics?
14. How do you find the new ways of teaching and learning, i.e. the participatory methods – do they work for you or not? Please, explain.
15. Can you explain to me what you think of how your teacher interacts with students – are they approachable or not? Please explain.
16. What do you do if you have a sensitive question on HIV and AIDS in the classroom?
17. What is your opinion about the youth who are already sexually active (I ask them this question rather than asking them directly if they are sexually active as they are not bound to say it)?
18. What do you think about other people (including youth) who are already infected with HIV?
19. Do you have any sexual reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS) misconceptions?
Appendix 9: Classroom observation guide

Name: __________________________  Date: __________________________

Class observed: __________________________  Time: __________________________

Observer: __________________________  Classroom: __________________________

Observation Number:  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  
  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18

*All items marked Not Observed must have an explanation in the Comments section below

1 = Not observed  2 = More emphasis recommended  3 = Accomplished well

Class Structure
Reviews previous day’s lesson content  1  2  3
Presents overview of day’s lesson  1  2  3
Presents topics in logical sequence  1  2  3
Relates today’s lesson to previous/future lessons  1  2  3
Summarises major points of the lesson  1  2  3

Comments

Presentation
Explains major/minor points with clarity  1  2  3
Defines unfamiliar terms, concepts and principles  1  2  3
Uses good and relevant examples to clarify points  1  2  3
Uses varied explanations for complex/difficult material  1  2  3
Emphasises important points  1  2  3
Writes key terms on blackboard  1  2  3
Integrates materials (examples, cases, simulations) from ‘real world’  1  2  3
Active, collaborative and cooperative learning favoured over passive learning  1  2  3
Shows all steps in solutions to homework problems  1  2  3

Comments

Interaction
Employs participatory learning activities (small group discussions, student-led activities)  1  2  3
Actively encourages student questions  1  2  3
Asking questions to monitor student understanding  1  2  3
Invites class discussion  1  2  3
Waiting sufficiently for students to answer questions  1  2  3
Listening carefully and thoughtfully to student questions  1  2  3
Responding appropriately to student questions  1  2  3
Restating questions and answers when necessary  1  2  3
Demonstrating respect for diversity and requiring similar respect in class  1  2  3
Comments

Content Knowledge and Relevance
Appears knowledgeable 1 2 3
Appears well organised 1 2 3
Presents material at an appropriate level for students 1 2 3
Explains concepts clearly 1 2 3
Presents material appropriate to the purpose of the lesson 1 2 3
Relates concepts to student’s experience 1 2 3

Comments

Class management
Explaining to students why their behaviour is unacceptable 1 2 3
Explaining what treatment will be given for unacceptable behaviour 1 2 3
Ensuring the rest of the class is undisturbed while managing bad behaviour 1 2 3
Students punished immediately, i.e. asked to leave the classroom/not 1 2 3

Summary Comments
What were the teacher’s major strengths as demonstrated in the observation?

What suggestions do you have for improving the teacher’s skills or methodology?

If this was a repeat observation, what progress did you discern in the teacher’s skills?

Any either effective or ineffective teaching practices observed (attach additional pages if necessary)

_________________________________________  __________________________________________
Observer Signature                     Date

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Appendix 10: Focus Group Discussion topic guide

Project Title: Understanding the development and enactment of Life Skills HIV-Based Education (LS[BE]) in Malawi

1. Recap on the research (5 minutes) – aims, researcher introduction, participants, other locations, explanation of anonymity & confidentiality, explanation of audio recording
2. Personal introductions (5 minutes)
3. Ground rules (5 minutes)
   a. Everything said in the group will be treated as confidential
   b. We will give respect to each other by listening to what is being said
   c. Everyone’s view will be treated with respect – even when their view is very different from our own
4. Values continuum – statements (50 minutes - around 5 statements to be chosen for discussion, 10 minutes per topic)
   a. Your family is the best source of information
   b. Religion helps in differentiating between right and wrong
   c. Money brings happiness (or not)
   d. Media is a good source of information for young people
   e. It is important to always say what you think even if you are against everybody else
   f. Young people don’t know the difference between right and wrong
   g. Girls should not be allowed out on their own
   h. A good education is the most important thing in life
   i. It’s important to learn about sex and relationships at school
   j. Men are stronger than women
   k. Women are stronger than men
   l. Women are more caring than men
   m. Men are more caring than women
   n. Anything a girl can do; a boy can do better
   o. You should only have sex with someone that you love
   p. Young people shouldn’t talk about sex
   q. Homosexuality is normal
   r. It’s okay to have a child out of wedlock
   s. It’s ok to have an abortion

5. Closure (5 minutes)
Appendix 11: Example of FGD including seating arrangement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Discussion Guide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archival #: …………………………</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site: Njelwa Community Day Secondary School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderator: Wezi Mvalo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date : 14 April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Time : 10:15 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants: 10 (Ten) Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note Taker : Harry SATUMBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcriber : Harry SATUMBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Time : 11:18 a.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions Asked/Key Area Discussed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family is the best source of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is important to always say what you think even if you are against everybody else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Money brings happiness (or not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is important to learn about sex and relationships at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Men are stronger than women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. You should only have sex with someone that you love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Anything a girl can do, a boy can do it better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is ok to have an abortion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seating Chart (Diagram): Make a seating chart indicating the participants and their number or identifier. Use this chart to identify speakers as you take notes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEATING ARRANGEMENT OF BOYS DURING FGDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boniface Shadreck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Zayambika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephano Mtsinje</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Tiyamike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Mijoya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Jimu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson Bizwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaki Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalileni Nkhoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madalitso Kampila</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Focus Group Discussion Note-Taker Form with Field Notes

| Archival # | ………………………… | Number of Participants | 10 (Ten) |
| Site | Njelwa Community Day Secondary School | Note Taker | Harry SATUMBA |
| Moderator | Wezi Mvalo | Transcriber | Harry SATUMBA |
| Date | 14 April 2015 | End Time | 11:18 a.m. |
| Start Time | 10:15 a.m. | |

#### Questions Asked / Key Area Discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question # (# or Key Word)</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Family is the best source of information | **Family is the best source of information** because when you are going astray parents and other family members advise you so that you can take the right route in life.  
Not all information from parents and other family members is correct. Some information is not correct especially information regarding some cultural practices which are harmful to young people.  
When we see that information coming from family members is not correct we just ignore it.  
It's difficult to argue with parents especially when their advice is wrong. | Interaction between students is interesting especially as they talk about different opinions. Some agree that parents are a good source of information and others don’t. Students seem engaged. They all seem comfortable and not shy to interact at all. |
| Important to always say what you think even if you are against everybody else | **It's important because your idea may come out to be true and important.**  
One does not need to consider his or her age before speaking.  
Everyone has the right to freedom of speech.  
Sometimes one may not know that his or her point of view is wrong until they say it and get opinion from others. | Students comfortable and discussion flowing really naturally. |
| Brings happiness (or not) | **Money makes us fulfil our needs and goals.**  
Most families that have money they are also happy as they are able to buy what they want. | Students really take a long time in discussing this, especially when they engage with the reasons why money could be bad. They |
- Sometimes money may bring happiness while at other times money may bring problems. When the youth have money sometimes they go to drink beer which is bad for their health and school.
- Money requires some level of financial literacy. However, it is not everybody who is literate in finance who can make good decision when it comes to utilising money.
- The youth who drink beer “Sachets” come from families that have money but those coming from poor families they cannot afford to buy beer.
- Sometimes money may bring happiness while at other times money may bring problems. When the youth have money sometimes they go to drink beer which is bad for their health and school.
- Money requires some level of financial literacy. However, it is not everybody who is literate in finance who can make good decision when it comes to utilising money.
- The youth who drink beer “Sachets” come from families that have money but those coming from poor families they cannot afford to buy beer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important to learn about sex and relationships at school</th>
<th>One is able to get information from friend.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It enriches knowledge on sex and relationships which will be important in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is important to learn about sex and relationships in school but the challenge that we have is that teachers are not comfortable to talk about sensitive issues when it comes to sex and relationships. LSBE is taught in a fashion that is strictly preparing students for exams not to equip them with skills that they can use in their daily lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes it is important to learn about sex and relationships in school but here (at this school) the emphasis is on abstinence which is difficult sometimes to do. So because of the emphasis on abstinence other methods of preventing HIV and AIDS such as condom use are not thoroughly taught in class yet some of the youths engage in sex because they cannot manage to abstain. They do not know how to use condoms properly because they are not adequately taught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The discussions revealed that the youths think that the information which is given to them concerning sex and relationships is inadequate. Teachers are not explicit and sometimes they jump certain issues for fear of talking about sensitive issues. Students give examples of misconceptions they have about sex and moderator clarifies – asks students to explain their understanding afterwards and it seems these have been clarified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are stronger than women</td>
<td>• It is not true that men are stronger than women because men and women are supposed to be equal. • By nature men are stronger than women. There are some trades / jobs that can only be done by men not women i.e. digging a grave. • That is not true because digging graves is just by culture that men should be doing such work otherwise if culture was allowing women too would have been digging graves. • There are some women who are physically stronger than men. So to say that men are stronger than women may not be true • It is true because head a family is a man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could only have sex with someone that you love</td>
<td>• Yes one should have sex with someone that he or she love because that is the only way one can be protected from sexually transmitted diseases. • When you have sex with the one that you love both of you are free to talk about anything including the things that you like or dislike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have an abortion</td>
<td>• It is ok to have an abortion because it can allow the girl to continue with her education. • No it is not ok to have an abortion because a girl can die during the abortion. • No it is not ok because abortion is just as good as killing. • The Ministry of education is implementing a policy on re-enrolment – which says that when a girl become pregnant she can be allowed to come back to school after giving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
birth to her child. So with this policy I think it is not ok to have an abortion.
Appendix 12: Example of media coverage on cultural tradition

Malawian 'hyena man' arrested for having sex with children
An HIV-positive Malawian man, who says he is paid to have sex with children as part of initiation rites, has been arrested on the president's orders.
Eric Aniva, a sex worker known in Malawi as a "hyena", was the subject of a BBC feature last week.
He told the BBC that he did not mention his HIV status to those who hire him.
President Peter Mutharika said the police should investigate and charge him over the cases of defilement he had seemingly confessed to.
The BBC's Ed Butler, who covered the story about Malawi's sexual "cleansing practices", says in some remote southern regions of the country it is traditional for girls to be made to have sex with a man after their first menstruation.
Some of the girls are as young as 12 years old, he reported.
What is known as a "hyena" in Malawi culture is usually a man who has sex with widows or married women who cannot fall pregnant.
'Horrific practices'
"While we must promote positive cultural values and positive socialisation of our children, the president says harmful cultural and traditional practices cannot be accepted in this country," presidential spokesman Mgeme Kalilani said in a statement.
Mr Aniva would "further be investigated for exposing the young girls to contracting HIV and further be charged accordingly", he said.
The president had also ordered all men and parents involved to be investigated, Mr Kalilani said.
"All people involved in this malpractice should be held accountable for subjecting their children and women to this despicable evil," the statement said.
"These horrific practices although done by a few also tarnish the image of the whole nation of Malawi internationally and bring shame to us all."
Last year Malawi banned child marriage, raising the legal age of marriage from 15 to 18 - something activists hoped would put an end to early sexual initiations.
Mr Aniva told the BBC that he planned to stop taking part in sexual cleansing practices.

26 July 2016 (reported by BBC's Ed Butler and available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36892963.)
Appendix 13: Malawi national policies guiding HIV and AIDS prevention

Malawi Education Act

The Malawi Education Act, established in 1962 is composed of 11 sections which include: i) basic policies for promoting education; ii) the structure and role of advisory committees; iii) education funds; iv) the structure, roles and rights of regional education administrative bodies; v) management structure of public schools; vi) necessary procedures to start schools; vii) teaching licences and their registration; viii) complying to syllabi in each school; ix) the rights of principals; x) the rights of ministers over school tuitions; and xi) the rights of ministers over rules and other penalties (Law Commission, 2010). Since its establishment and in order to adapt it to the contextual socio-economic demands of the country, it was then updated in 2010. The Review of the Education Act aimed to establish an organisation devoted to curriculum development as well as an independent organisation for registering and authorising teaching licences, and to construct a system to register and inspect public/private schools and teacher training colleges (Law Commission, 2010).

Malawi Education Policy

The Malawi Education Policy (mainly referenced to as the Policy Investment Framework (PIF)) is the national policy guiding education in Malawi. The PIF was originally set to accomplish Education for All by 2015. In order to do this, it had five main objectives as follows: i) increasing access to education; ii) alleviating existing inequalities across social groups and regions; iii) maintaining and improving the quality and relevance of education; iv) developing an institutional and financial framework; and v) increasing the sources of finance for the education sector such as the communities and the private sector.

The specific objectives of the newly updated PIF were: to improve access for children to secondary and tertiary education; promote greater social equity between various groups in society; and to enhance quality of education offered at all levels and making it relevant to the needs of the society (GoM, 2000). Based on studies by Wolf et al. (1999) which concluded that the key ingredient to successful policy implementation is the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the policy formation process, PIF therefore adopted a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) which stipulated collaborative working between government departments, ministries, donors, NGOs and CBOs.
The National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017) clearly sets out the GoM’s agenda, goals and objectives of its education. The goals and objectives relate to expanded equitable access to education; improved quality and relevant education; and improved governance and management of the sector. It is hoped that the NESP will contribute to the realisation of the MGDS III. The GoM envisages that education should “enable people to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, expertise and competencies to perform effectively as citizens, workforce and as leaders of Malawi, thereby reducing poverty amongst the people of Malawi irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or any other discriminatory characteristics under the core values of professionalism, moral, transparency and accountability” (MoEST, 2014: 3).

The MoEST (2015) believes that a healthy population is key to increased productivity and sustainable economic growth; and that education is the key for socio-economic development and industrial growth as it facilitates skills development (GoM, 2017). The Malawi Development and Growth Strategic Plan III (MDGS III), is the fourth medium-term development strategy formulated to contribute to the attainment of wealth creation through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development. As such, it is treated as a policy framework that articulates issues related to both the economic growth and social development.

It therefore represents a decisive and strategic single reference document to be followed by all stakeholders to achieve the set goals. The MDGS III has an overarching theme of “Building a Productive, Competitive and Resilient Nation” (GoM, 2017: 12) which aims to improve productivity, turning the country into a competitive nation and developing resilience to shocks and hazards. The MDGS III is anchored on five key priority areas which were chosen on the basis of their strong linkages among each other as well as other sectors of the economy: agriculture; water development and climate change; education and skills development; transport and ICT infrastructure; and health and population.

Linked to the key priority areas, there are additional development areas which are: financial services; vulnerability, disaster management and social support; gender, youth development, persons with disability and social welfare; human settlement and physical planning; environmental sustainability; HIV/AIDS management; and peace and security. MGDS III’s cross-
cutting areas, which include gender balance, youth development, empowerment of persons with disability, HIV and AIDS management, environment and climate change management, disaster risk reduction and governance, will be mainstreamed into the priority areas to ensure there is comprehensive and inclusive development in the years of its implementation.

MGDS III also takes into account Malawi’s international, continental and regional obligations where special consideration has been on domesticating the key commitments such as the 2030 Agenda on SDGs, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA), the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC RISDP) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Treaty.

**Malawi National Youth Policy**

The Malawi National Youth Policy (developed in 2013) is the government’s commitment to the importance of youth development in the overall national development agenda. The vision of the policy is to have “an educated, healthy, well trained, cultured, vibrant and productive youth” (GoM, 2013, p. 4). The Youth Policy refers to several challenges youth face including high illiteracy; unemployment; underemployment; high population growth rate; exploitation by adults; poverty; and HIV and AIDS. Above all, the policy highlights the lack of youth participation through active and meaningful decision making on issues which affect them. The policy therefore provides broad guidelines from which youth programmes and services are to be developed to facilitate meaningful participation and involvement of the youth. The policy has been informed by other policies some of which are: the MGDs; MDGS II; Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2009); Vision 2020; Education for All goals; The Constitution of Malawi; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the African Youth Charter; the National Education Policy; and the National HIV and AIDS Policy (2003). Amongst the responsibilities youth have over themselves include: protecting themselves and others against HIV infection, early childrearing and marriage; avoiding engaging in health damaging behaviour such as excessive alcohol intake, drug abuse and other risky behaviours including early sex, multiple sexual partners, inconsistent and incorrect condom use. The main priority areas for action highlighted in the policy are: youth participation and leadership; youth economic

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20 In the Malawi context, youth are defined as those aged between 10 and 35 years though this definition is quite flexible bearing in mind the variety of parameters that could be used in categorising youth.
empowerment; national youth service; education for youth; youth in science, technology and environment; youth and health and nutrition; and social services, sports, recreation and culture.

*Malawi Sexual Reproductive Health Policy*

The GoM is committed to providing comprehensive and integrated SRH services in line with the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt, 1994. In addition, Malawi is also a signatory of the AU Maputo Plan of Action which advocates for integrated SRHR Plan (Munthali, 2013). The MoH through the Reproductive Health Unit has since 1997 coordinated the integration, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of SRHR services at all levels. The Malawi National Reproductive Health Programme (MNRHP) is the framework through which the MoH manages SRH services. The goal for the MNRHP is to promote, through informed choice, safer reproductive health practices by men, women, and youth including use of quality and accessible reproductive health services.
Appendix 14: Detailed research phases and questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Research participants</th>
<th>Data collection instrument</th>
<th>Information sought</th>
<th>Data recording method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What are the ideas and discourses that influence the development of LS[B]E curriculum and how is it organised for teaching, learning and assessment?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Phases and description**

**Phase 1 (scoping: Sept. ’12 to Jul. ’13):**
Establishing contacts with MoEST, MoH, MoWGC; NAC, UNICEF, UNESCO, GIZ, UNFPA, YONECO, SAFE, and CSR including gaining access of the case study selection. Detailed literature review took a large proportion of the time in this phase so as to scope what research had already been done in this area and what remains debatable on LS[B]E curriculum mediation. Ethics review application from the University also took place towards the end of the phase once the instruments were finalised.
Questionnaire piloting also took place in this phase to test the instrument with the same age of students here in the UK.

**Phase 2 (fieldwork: Oct. ’13 to Jul. ’15):**
Six field visits (each lasting five weeks and only during term time) to Malawi firstly to get immersed in the study sites and then later on to collect the said data from each participant group, i.e. policy makers (both from relevant governmental ministerial bodies (including curriculum developers); independent NGOs working in this area); and document review; interviewing teachers, administering student questionnaires and interviewing them; FGDs; classroom observations. The classroom observations had to be timed around the term time when they were specifically looking at HIV and AIDS topics only.
All transcripts were also being typed up during this phase so that any emerging themes could be picked up as well as any gaps that would be identified should there be need to tweak the instruments being used.

**Analysis of:**
- National Education Sector Plan

**Structured interviews**
- Stakeholders of Curriculum Developers
- Interview schedule
- Understanding the curriculum development process

**Data recording method**
- N/A

**Digital recording**

RQ2: How do teachers implement, and students experience the developed LS[B]E curriculum at classroom level?

**Phases and description**

**Phase 2 (fieldwork: Oct. ’13 to Jul. ’15):**
Six field visits (each lasting 5 weeks and only during term time) to Malawi firstly to get immersed in the study sites and then later on to collect the said data from the selected case study site including teachers and students, as well as through student questionnaires, classroom observations, and FGDs. The classroom observations had to be timed around the term time when they were specifically looking at HIV and AIDS topics only.
All transcripts were also being typed up during this phase so that any emerging themes could be picked up as well as any gaps that would be identified should there be need to tweak the instruments being used.

**Phase 3 (data analysis: Aug. ’15 to Mar. ’16):** drawing up of emerging themes from data.
Phase 4 (communicating draft research findings back to MoEST and other state and non-state actors: Apr. ’16 to Apr. ’17):
Three drafts of research findings with follow-up iterations of report for data validation to MoEST with further preliminary findings reported to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structured interviews</th>
<th>Teacher trainers</th>
<th>Interview schedule</th>
<th>Teacher preparation process</th>
<th>Digital recording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>MIE and MoEST officials</td>
<td>Interview schedule</td>
<td>Process of interpreting curriculum documents into student hand- and teacher guide-books</td>
<td>Digital recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Perceptions of SRH education; socio-economic level; student participant selection tool</td>
<td>Student’s responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>LS[B]E Teachers</td>
<td>Video recording and observation schedule</td>
<td>Pedagogical practices</td>
<td>Video recording; Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tasks / tests</td>
<td>Assessment tasks and tests</td>
<td>Observation guide and past exam papers</td>
<td>Inquiring methods and responsiveness; understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Assessment tasks and test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Students (separate gender groups)</td>
<td>FGD schedule</td>
<td>Perceptions of SRH education and services; sources of information</td>
<td>Digital recording; FGD transcripts; Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Teachers including headteacher and deputy headteacher</td>
<td>Interview schedules</td>
<td>Professional background; perceptions of LS[B]E subject; teaching LS[B]E</td>
<td>Digital recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Students in Forms 1 and 2</td>
<td>Interview schedule</td>
<td>Perceptions of LS[B]E as a subject; learning LS[B]E</td>
<td>Digital recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase and description:
Phase 5 (refining of results and thesis writing: May ’17 to Apr. ’18)
Appendix 15: Detailed secondary school outcomes

The secondary education outcomes are categorised into seven sets of essential skills to be acquired by a secondary school graduate. The skills are:

**Citizenship skills**
1. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the symbols of nationhood
2. Demonstrate a spirit of patriotism and national unity
3. Apply decision-making skills necessary for participation in civic affairs
4. Demonstrate a spirit of leadership and service
5. Show respect for one’s own and other people’s rights and responsibilities
6. Tolerate other people’s attitudes and beliefs
7. Demonstrate respect for the rule of law
8. Understand characteristics of good governance
9. Initiate and implement community development projects
10. Demonstrate a sense of good neighbourliness
11. Demonstrate a sense of national, regional and international understanding
12. Demonstrate cooperative behaviour
13. Demonstrate personal and social responsibility

**Ethical and social-cultural skills**
14. Demonstrate moral, spiritual and ethical attitudes and values
15. Appreciate Malawi’s diverse cultures and their respective practices
16. Appreciate existing national institutions and cultural heritage
17. Appreciate the value of the relationship between the individual and society
18. Respect one’s own and other people’s cultures
19. Identify beliefs which promote or retard national development
20. Evaluate beliefs, taboos and superstitious in relation to national development
21. Uphold beliefs which promote national development

**Economic development and environmental management skills**
22. Understand Malawi’s economy and economic structure
23. Demonstrate entrepreneurial and/or vocational skills for formal or informal employment
24. Exploit economic opportunities stemming from agriculture
25. Demonstrate an interest in land husbandry, animal husbandry and aquaculture
26. Apply appropriate agricultural practices and methods
27. Acquire positive attitudes and skills, and apply them to the sustainable development of the natural and physical environment
28. Understand the importance of diversified agriculture for Malawi’s economy
29. Understand the impact of technologies on economic productivity
30. Apply relevant technologies to various economic activities
31. Apply value addition practices to agricultural and environmental resource utilisation and management
32. Appreciate Malawi’s environmental resources
33. Understand the impact of rapid population growth on natural resources and the delivery of social services
34. Apply a variety of measures to conserve Malawi’s natural resources
35. Apply ICT skills to improve intellectual growth, personal enhancement and communication
36. Demonstrate the ability to adapt to climate change and mitigate its impact on the economy and environment
37. Appreciate the importance of energy in economic development
38. Understand the importance of diversifying the economy through sectors such as tourism, mining and manufacturing

**Occupational and entrepreneurial skills**
39. Demonstrate the spirit of self-reliance through vocational and entrepreneurial activities
40. Apply appropriate vocational, occupational and entrepreneurial skills to individual and national advancement
41. Demonstrate effective communication skills for the transfer of occupational and entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, attitudes and values
42. Apply the principles of science and technology, entrepreneurship and management to promote active and productive participation in society
43. Demonstrate creativity and innovation for the benefit of the individual, community and the nation as a whole
44. Demonstrate an understanding of indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, and apply them to personal intellectual growth and national development
45. Use vocational, occupational and entrepreneurial skills for the creation of economic opportunities in agriculture and other sectors

**Practical skills**
46. Acquire entrepreneurial skills related to agriculture, commerce and industry
47. Apply appropriate skills to agricultural, commercial and industrial production
48. Demonstrate positive attitudes to manual work
49. Demonstrate excellence in any kind of workmanship
50. Demonstrate sporting ability and sportsmanship
51. Demonstrate the ability to use creative and innovative artistic talents for self-employment

**Creativity and resourcefulness**
52. Demonstrate a spirit of inquiry and creative, critical and lateral thinking
53. Use problem-solving techniques to solve practical problems
54. Demonstrate an imaginative and creative mind
55. Exploit creative potential
56. Understand personal strengths and weaknesses and use strengths to promote healthy self-esteem
57. Maximise the use of available resources

**Scientific and technological skills**
58. Apply appropriate scientific, technological and vocational skills to improve economic productivity
59. Apply relevant innovations in science and technology
60. Demonstrate a capacity to utilise appropriate technology
61. Demonstrate basic research skills
Appendix 16: List of 2004 LSE syllabus contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prof. Moira Chimombo</td>
<td>SAFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ass. Prof. Samson MacJessie-Mbewe</td>
<td>Chancellor College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr E. T. Kamchedzera</td>
<td>Chancellor College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Symon Chiziwa</td>
<td>Chancellor College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A. Chinjati</td>
<td>HHI Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F. Katsala</td>
<td>Malawi Revenue Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Matilda Luhanga</td>
<td>Mulunguzi Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Joyce Kasambara</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mercy C. Phiri</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Olive Malombozi</td>
<td>Malawi Blood Transfusion Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>John C. Msawayo</td>
<td>DIAS – Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Raphael Agabu</td>
<td>DIAS – Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dr William Susuwele-Banda</td>
<td>Department for Curriculum Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mrs Enia Ngalande</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Naireti Molande</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dr Ezekiel Kachisa</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Austin Kalambo</td>
<td>Malawi Institute of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Olive Namphamba</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Misheck Munthali</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mercy Ziba</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Alice Saiti</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kondwani Kawonga</td>
<td>Ministry of Education Science and Technology</td>
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