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**Examining the Influence and Relationship between the Weberian Model of
Bureaucracy and Theories of Strategic Management on Decision-Making in the
Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of The Gambia**

Sampierre Mendy

**A thesis submitted to The Open University in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFPRC	-	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
AMANAHA	-	General Secretariat for Islamic Arabic Education
BESPOR	-	Basic Education Support for Poverty Reduction
BSA	-	British Sociological Association
CCM	-	Coordinating Committee Meeting
CEM	-	Catholic Education Mission
CES	-	Catholic Education Secretariat
CIA	-	Central Intelligence Agency
CPADT Teachers	-	Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers
CRR	-	Central River Region
DFID	-	Department for International Development
DFID	-	Department for International Development
DPS	-	Deputy Permanent Secretary
ECD	-	Early Childhood Development
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ERP	-	Economic Recovery Programme
FIOH	-	Future in Our Hands
FTI	-	Fast-Track Initiative
GABECE	-	Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations
GAMWORKS-	-	Gambia Agency for the Management of Public Works
GBOS	-	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GO	-	General Orders
GPPA	-	Gambia Public Procurement Authority
GTU	-	Gambia's Teachers Union
GTUCCU	-	Gambia Teachers Union Cooperative Credit Union
HR	-	Human Resource
HREC	-	Human Research Ethics Committee
HTC	-	Higher Teacher's Certificate

IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
JD	-	Job Description
LBS	-	Lower Basic School
MIT	-	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MoBSE	-	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
MOFEA	-	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoHERST Technology	-	Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NASA	-	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NAT	-	National Assessment Test
NCC	-	National Consultative Committee
NGO	-	Non-Government Organisations
NHRC	-	National Human Rights Commission
NPM	-	New Public Management
NTA	-	National Training Authority
OECD	-	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OU	-	Open University
PAC	-	Public Accounts Committee
PAGE	-	Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment
PAS	-	Principal Assistant Secretary
PEC	-	Public and Enterprises Committee
PEO	-	Principal Education Officer
PMO	-	Personnel Management Office
PMS	-	Performance Management System
PPARBD	-	Planning, Policy Analysis, Research & Budgeting Directorate
PPP	-	People's Progressive Party
PS	-	Permanent Secretary
PSC	-	Public Service Commission

PTA	-	Parent Teacher Association
PTC	-	Primary Teacher's Certificate
RED	-	Regional Education Directorate
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SEO	-	Senior Education Officer
SIG	-	School Improvement Grant
SIP	-	School Improvement Program
SMC	-	School Management Committee
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
SSS	-	Senior Secondary School
TOR	-	Terms of Reference
TRRC	-	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
TV	-	Television
UBS	-	Upper Basic School
UK	-	United Kingdom
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	-	United States
WASSC	-	West African Senior School Certificate
WB	-	World Bank
WFP	-	World Food Programme

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Dedication

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Abstract

This study examines the applicability and influence of the Weberian model of bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation, and of selected models drawn from the field of strategic management for explaining the decision-making processes of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) of The Gambia.

The choice of site is intended to test the explanatory power of these theoretical frames in an instance of a non-Western public administration. In fact, non-Western in general and African contexts specifically are underrepresented in the public administration and management literature. The few contextual studies on African states and public organisations have been dominated by Western researchers and tend to focus on their quality of decision-making based on foreign-originated concepts and models. This context-free approach to researching African public organisations has led to broad generalisations about public administration and management in the African continent. This includes their tendency to be perceived and portrayed as ineffective due to their high level of informality.

The study adopts a critical realist perspective, case study method and thematic and narrative analysis strategies. Using a purposive sample, the study data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and documentary evidence.

The study findings reveal that it is possible to find features of Weberian bureaucracy in a former British colony and an African public administrative setting. This has policy implications for decision-making in the public sector. Further to its significant influence on the sector's decision-making processes, Weberian bureaucracy has shielded it from political, donor and stakeholder interference. The study findings demonstrate that Weberian bureaucracy is suitable in highly heterogeneous societies and less developed democracies. Despite hindering the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy, some cultural (informal) norms and practices, such as joking relations and social ethics, enhanced MoBSE's decision-making. These findings challenge the notion that most African public bureaucracies are ineffective due to their high informality. Due to the conflicting contextual pressures of exploiting the benefits of adopting a Weberian bureaucracy and the need to adapt bureaucracy to the local context, MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy that enhanced its decision-making. These findings are an important qualification and a significant contribution to Weberian bureaucracy theory.

Further to indicating the explanatory power of theories of strategic management (strategic planning school) and its coexistence with Weberian bureaucracy, findings from this study suggest that their relationship in decision-making should be conceptualised from a nuanced rather than an antithetical or polarised perspective. At a broader epistemological and methodological level, these findings highlight the importance of analysing contextual influences in researching and managing public organisations.

1.0 Background

1.1 Introduction

The Weberian model of bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation, has been exported to other parts of the world, including Africa. Notably, through colonialism (Max Weber Stiftung¹, 2021) and donor conditionality, including the structural adjustment reforms programme in the 1980s. It continues to be one of the most proliferated and dominant ways of organising the public sector across the globe (Torfing et al., 2020), with significant implications for public management.

Notwithstanding, public sector organisations across the globe operate in different contexts/settings. These differences range from political, administrative, and public management reform trajectory (Painter and Peters, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011), patterns of democracy (Lijphart, 1999, 2012), cultural (Hofstede, 2001; Bouckaert, 2007; Goffee and Jones, 1996; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Ouchi, 1980), structural (Mintzberg, 1979), size, complexity and diversity (O'Toole and Meier, 2014; Cameron and Green, 2014) to the capacity of individual organisations. Painter and Peters' (2010) and Pollitt and Bouckaert's (2011) work on administrative traditions and comparison of public administrative reforms, respectively, provides the most comprehensive global classification of countries based on enduring and similar patterns of public management and reforms. While acknowledging that public administrations change over time, they cite empirical evidence from some of the most reformed countries in the world, such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, to support their argument that some features and general patterns of public management persist despite these reforms (Painter and Peters, 2010). This aligns with the view that France, a Napoleonic tradition, is a stalled, frozen and immovable society and state (Crozier, 1964) and one of the least influenced by NPM approaches (Bezes, 2010).

The above and other empirical studies across the globe culminated in the classification of countries based on commonalities in their administrative culture. These include Anglo-American, Napoleonic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Latin American, Postcolonial South Asian and African, East Asian, Soviet and Islamic (Painter and Peters, 2010). Among others, these classifications provide benefits in comparative analysis, case study selection and methodological choice; orientation/preference and effectiveness

¹ A German word meaning foundation or endowment.

of public management reforms; management and governance capacity and interpretations. Furthermore, while recognising the need for generalisability to some extent, the authors mentioned above acknowledge the limitation of the above classification due to the possibility of hybrids and thus, advocate contextualisation in researching and managing public organisations. Moreover, these hybrids (Painter and Peters, 2010; Mintzberg, 1979) can be equally or more effective and thus recognise that there can be multiple paths to an effective outcome (Doty et al, 1993). This is compatible with the researcher's and this study's epistemological philosophical stance.

The relevance of Painter and Peters (2010) work on administrative traditions includes guiding the researcher in his case study design and methodological choice, as well as analysis and interpretations regarding the level of consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management and their influence on the decision-making processes of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) of The Gambia, a distinctive, under-researched and Postcolonial Anglophone West African public administrative context. Furthermore, public management is a multidisciplinary field and draws heavily on many disciplines, including law, management, economics, political science, public policy, organisation science, anthropology and strategic management (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Ongaro 2020). For increased effectiveness, public sector leaders, researchers and stakeholders must adopt a contextual approach to managing and researching public organisations (Pollitt, 2013).

Despite this, the rapidly changing public sector environments, including new technological advancements and demands from public sector stakeholders (Boin et al., 2020) have resulted in many reforms and the adoption of other complementary and alternative theoretical perspectives and source disciplines for understanding decision-making (Van de Walle, 2016; Torfing et al., 2020), such as strategic management. These governance paradigms have been introduced into public administrations and organisations by political and public sector leaders (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, 2017; du Gay, 2005), international donors/partners (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, Blundo and Le Meur, 2008) and consulting firms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004, 2017; Salaman, 2005). While the above has resulted in the multiplicity of public management approaches, including the formation of hybrids (Doty et al., 1993; du Gay, 2005; Painter and Peters, 2010), some of these tend to be predominant at a certain period – as currently is the case for neo-Weberian state and

public value management in most western and developed countries (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Torfing et al., 2020). This applies to the Gambian basic and secondary education sector as well.

National political and cultural contexts are considered to have the greatest impact on the decision-making practices and the overall performance of organisations in general and public organisations in particular (O'Toole and Meier, 2014). This tends to be higher in developing, heterogeneous and polarised societies, including Africa. The Gambia's high ethnic and religious diversity amidst a weak national identity has contributed to some high levels of ethnic and cultural orientation and particularistic tendencies among some politicians and senior bureaucrats. This is a significant challenge for the realisation of the ideals of Weberian bureaucracy. Nevertheless, MoBSE has performed relatively well among Gambian public service and like-minded organisations in West Africa (Barma et al., 2014) in the face of the above and other challenges, especially political interference and scarce resources. While this relatively highperformance results from deploying several management logics, this is partly due to its adoption of Weberian bureaucracy, especially the procedure and rule-based principle. Thus, the consolidation of Weberian bureaucratic principles and associated values including equality and professionalism, especially in the largest public service sectors (geographical scope and diversity) such as education, could help reduce the negative impacts of discriminatory national cultural practices and political interference on the decision-making processes of African and Gambian public bureaucracies including MoBSE and thereby significantly improve public service effectiveness and standards of living of the citizenry. In summary, the descriptive power (empirical evidence in African contexts) and normative value (can make things better) of Weberian bureaucracy make it a highly suitable theoretical lens for examining decision-making practices in Africa. Besides, the important role of public bureaucracies in decision-making coupled with the fact that they bear the largest responsibility for implementing government decisions (Donald and Rosenbloom, 2015), increased knowledge about Weberian bureaucracy and its impact on public administration could positively impact public service performance.

However, strategic management, a largely private-oriented and non-bureaucratic management logic and field of scholarly inquiry have witnessed a high proliferation (Llewellyn and Tappin, 2003) and enhanced applicability in the public sector over the

recent past (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). The high proliferation and enhanced applicability of strategic management in the public sector is due mainly to public sector stakeholders' quest to replicate the performance effects of strategic management in the public sector. These include the need for international donors like World Bank to ensure the achievement of their goals and loan repayment. Another major contributor to the adoption and enhanced applicability of managerial approaches such as strategic management include the transformational effects of public management reforms. These reform impacts include among others, the adoption of private sector-like structures and management approaches such as output-based accountability; agencification, decentralisation, marketisation and participatory mechanisms, including new public governance and networking (Peters, 2010, Bouckaert and Politt, 2011; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, Bouckaert, 2007). Furthermore, many public-sector oriented strategic management models, such as the public value approach, have emerged recently (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Aside from its role in improving stakeholder collaboration and cooperation, strategic management ensures organisational change and adaption to organisational realities. Its understanding and utilisation by public sector leaders are thus important for improved decision-making and effectiveness in the highly complex and rapidly changing global and public sector environments.

The strategic planning school has become the predominant strategic management approach in the Gambian public sector since it became independent from Britain in 1965. Despite the gradual shift towards and growing influence of strategic management, bureaucratic principles remain deeply embedded in the decision-making processes of MoBSE. Due to the increased applicability and potential of strategic management for public management (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), its positive impact on organisational performance (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; O'Toole and Meier, 2015), the distinctiveness of public sector settings in general (Bouckaert and Pollitt 2011, Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) and developing country contexts in particular, and the seeming lack of theoretical and empirical evidence on the relationship between strategic management and Weberian bureaucracy in the decision-making processes of public organisations in a developing country and African context is interesting and worth exploring.

This study adopts a context specificity perspective and supports contextualism rather than universalism in applying foreign (western) and private sector-oriented management models to recipient public sector settings for increased effectiveness. The adoption of a contextual lens for this study is because public organisations operate in different contexts globally. This is also true to some extent for organisations with similar mandates and size and those located in the same polity, locality and community due to slight to major differences in their internal environment and how organisational leaders manage their external environments.

This study makes a theoretical and empirical contribution to the public management literature. Empirically, by examining and explaining the presence, drivers and inhibitors and influence of Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management on the decision-making processes of MoBSE. Theoretically, by showing how incorporating certain local traditions into the bureaucracy enhances its adoption. Given that MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy and the tendency for several to many management logics to co-exist in public administrations and organisations, there was a need to understand better how alternative approaches can explain its decision-making processes. Due to its increased applicability and potential for public management, strategic management (strategic planning school), a field of scholarly inquiry, was used to illustrate the explanatory power of strategic management theories and its relationship with Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in MoBSE.

1.2 Research problem/gap

Although a considerable volume of academic literature exists on African states and politics, these has been dominated by Western researchers, especially the US and UK and tend to focus on their level of performance based on western originated models (Blundo and Le Meur, 2008; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014). This context-free approach to researching African public organisations based on conceptual and few isolated empirical studies has led to broad generalisations about the African continent (Blundo and Le Meur, 2008). Prominent among these is neopatrimonialism – the view that African states as deficient, corrupt, and dominated by patronage and informality based on their departure from some ideal-type western management models such as Weberian bureaucracy (Blundo and Le Meur, 2008; Crook, 2010; Chris Willott, 2014) and low political will and overstaffing (Crook, 2010). While Bratton and van de Walle (1994; 1997) and Chabal and Daloz (1999) posit that

neopatrimonialism is at the centre of African public organisations, others believe that it is present in some European countries (Van de Walle et al. 2016), especially in post-communist states like Lithuania (Rauleckas et al., 2016) and an organisation-wide and global phenomenon (Therkildsen, 2014; Willott, 2014).

Despite almost half a decade of public management reforms, many African states continue to exhibit a state of incapacity or even crisis. The low impact of these western originated reform approaches is believed to be due to their incompatibility with African cultures and levels of development (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014); structural adjustment policies (Blundo and Le Meur, 2008); use of holistic rather than more effective piecemeal approaches in African political and organisational settings and emphasis on quick wins by international development partners (Hyden, 2010). Moreover, the tendency for bureaucracy in general and African public bureaucracies to be perceived, portrayed and studied in a negative rather than constructive approach makes it difficult to appreciate their distinctiveness and effectiveness (du Gay 2000; 2005; Peters, 2010). The relative success of the case study organisation despite its challenging operating environment makes it an interesting context for this study as this might illuminate how it balanced pressures to exploit the benefits of Weberian bureaucracy and the need to adapt bureaucracy to the local culture and norms.

The above negative and somewhat derogatory notions about bureaucracy are fuelled and aggravated by:

- the willingness of the public to embrace unsubstantiated claims against bureaucracy (du Gay 2005; 2009).
- academics - originators and advocates of public policy reform approaches (du Gay, 2002; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004).
- politicians who speak negatively about bureaucracy for partisan discourse reasons (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; du Gay, 2005).
- the broadening of schools of strategic management from the social sciences (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).
- other modern public management reform models dispersal agents including country of origin governments (e.g., the United Kingdom and the United States), development agents such as the DFID, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (Pollitt

and Bouckaert, 2004, Blundo and Le Meur, 2008) and big international consulting firms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Salaman, 2005).

While some scholars are sceptical of claims that NPM, intended to replace bureaucracy, has been institutionalised and transformational (Pollitt, 2004, 2011; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), others lament the irony of NPM as it has resulted in more bureaucratic procedures, higher staffing and low accountability through contracting to the private sector (Meier and Hill, 2005).

Although a few large-scale and national-level comparative studies have been conducted on bureaucratic (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014; Max Weber Stiftung, 2021) and governance (Blundo and Le Meur, 2008) practices in the African public sector, they were not based purely on the Weberian bureaucratic model and critical realist perspective. Regarding relevant studies at sector and organisational levels, a few qualitative studies have been carried out in various parts of the globe. These include an investigation of the Weberian bureaucracy's principle of meritocracy in the context of service higher education institutions (University of Damascus, Syria) and its effects on recruitment (Almasri, 2011), equal employment opportunity and workforce effectiveness in the face of a highly particularistic culture in the Omani civil service (Al-Ghailani, 2005), assessment of the relevance and importance of Weberian bureaucratic characteristic of professionalism in countries with different levels of democratic development (Cho et al., 2013), examination of Weber's theory of bureaucracy and its application to Nigerian public institutions (Bayo, 2013) and examination of how the institutions of the merit-based bureaucratic system in the South Korean Government evolved from 1948 to 1963 using the gradual institutional change theory of Mahoney and Thelen (2010) (Park 2014). However, currently, there seems to be no comprehensive empirical study that has examined the role of societal and politico-administrative contexts on the relevance (applicability) and influence of Weberian bureaucracy's principles: formal and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation; graded authority and hierarchy; meritocracy; office management through the written file; rule and procedure-based operations, permanent/protected employment (Weber, 1964), on decision-making in a single national, sector and organisational setting. Owing to its status as the oldest and largest public organisation in The Gambia, and its establishment by The Gambia's former

colonial master, Britain, a largely non-bureaucratic western administrative tradition, this study will examine and explain how contextual factors affect the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy in general and its consolidation in MoBSE, as an instance of a post-British west-African public administrative context more specifically. In addition, the applicability and influence of models of strategic management, a field of scholarly enquiry that has witnessed a high proliferation in the public sector over the past decades, and its relationship with Weberian bureaucracy in The Gambia and broader post-British West-African context, seem to be absent in the public management literature.

Given the above-highlighted gaps in the public management literature, this study aims to address this empirically through a case study on Weberian bureaucracy's presence, drivers and inhibitors, its mutual relationship with strategic management, and how they condition (frame) the decision-making processes of MoBSE. While it aims to examine how institutional and external contextual factors have influenced their applicability, it will help highlight the relevance and importance of analysing contextual influences in researching and managing public organisations. This will be achieved through an in-depth case study method and qualitative thematic and narrative analysis strategies.

1.3 Research objectives, question and sub-questions

1.3.1 Research objectives

The overall objective of this study is to examine and explain the influence of the Gambian context on the applicability of Weberian bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation, and strategic management, a modern and largely private sector-oriented management concept and field of scholarly enquiry in Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE).

To realise the broad objective mentioned above, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

1. Determine the presence of, drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE.
2. Examine and explain the applicability and influence of Weberian bureaucracy and selected theories of strategic management on the decision-making processes of MoBSE.

3. Detect empirical evidence about the Weberian model of bureaucracy, models and perspectives from strategic management that can explain the dynamics of public decision-making processes.

This will be achieved by reviewing existing academic and grey literature and an empirical case study on MoBSE, using individual and group interviews and observations as the main data collection methods. The following research question and sub-questions have been formulated to realise the above objectives.

1.3.2 Research question

- a. How does the Gambian cultural and politico-administrative context shape/condition the application of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management in the decision-making processes of MoBSE?

1.3.3 Sub-research questions

- a. To what extent is the Weberian bureaucracy empirically detectable in MoBSE?
- b. What are the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE?
- c. To what extent are the decision-making processes of MoBSE explained by Weberian bureaucracy or by alternative decision-making logics that can be interpreted through different fields of scholarly enquiry such as strategic management, and what are their mutual relationships?

1.4 Case selection and justification

Numerous studies have revealed the existence of successful organisations, including public bureaucracies across the globe. These thriving organisations, referred to as pockets of effectiveness (Roll, 2014), institutions taking root in challenging contexts (Barma et al., 2014), pockets of productivity (Daland, 1981; Leonard, 2008), pockets of efficiency (Geddes, 1990), islands of excellence (Crook, 2010; Therkildsen, 2008), institutions (Selznick's, 1957; Boin et al., 2020), have been able to deliver core services and results and earn legitimacy among the citizenry despite their challenging environments. Interestingly, they exist even in the poorest, most corrupt, undemocratic, and politically unstable countries (Grindle, 1997; Barma et al. 2014, Roll, 2014). For Selznick (1957) and Boin et al. (2020), this institutional status is gained when organisations, including those in the public sector, have: a unique identity and capability, a strong status and high acceptability and lasting viability through

adaptation. This can be achieved by shaping the identity of the organisation, building, and cultivating a staff that can deliver and maintaining a strong relationship with the approving environment (Selznick's, 1957).

The importance and suitability of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education for the examination of the presence, influence and relevance of Weberian bureaucracy is because, as in most countries across the globe, it is the largest civil service organisation in The Gambia owing to its country-wide coverage, high staff count and contribution to employment and overall national economic development. Besides, it has been the most impacted by colonialism and international donor influence (key drivers of foreign and western-originated management concepts and models in former colonies and donor-dependent countries) due to its status as the first government department to be established by the colonial administration (Bouy, 2019) and high dependence on external donor funding (MoBSE, 2016). Specifically, the possibility of finding a Weberian bureaucracy in a former British colony makes it an interesting case study context. This is because despite its largely non-bureaucratic nature, the British public administration ranks very high on the Weberian bureaucracy's merit-based principle and that this was highly utilised in the Gambian colonial service recruitment and promotion processes. Nevertheless, the promotion and consolidation of traditional modes of governance through indirect rule in former British colonies including The Gambia and the high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency including the ability of the President to hire and fire the executive unilaterally and senior members of the judiciary and senior bureaucrats after consultation with or on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission and Public Service Commission respectively; and influence the election and removal of Speaker and Deputy Speaker (elected from the five members nominated by the President) of the National Assembly (Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, 1997) may help provide explanations to the level of consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in the case study organisation.

Its relative success among Gambian public organisations, similar organisations in West Africa and high legitimacy among politicians, international donors and partners (Barma et al., 2014) is also a key consideration for its selection as case study organisation. This relative success was enabled through among others, the following:

- building the capacity and mentoring of core staff in policy planning and budgeting in the 1980s (Barma et al., 2014).
- decongesting functions from headquarters to the regional level through structural and functional transformation as part of the 2004 – 2015 Education policy objectives.
- high stakeholder involvement and commitment due to the introduction of the Coordination Committee Meeting, the sector’s largest, bi-monthly and rotational policy assessment and decision-making forum in 1996 and other stakeholder-wide participatory and performance management approaches such as school management committees, performance minimum standards for schools and service-level-agreements for all sector staff through the DFID sponsored Basic Education Support for Poverty Reduction (BESPOR) project in 2005 (World Bank, 2009).
- high stakeholder outreach and sensitisation through partnership with key local TV and radio stations and the recent establishment of its own digital TV station and newsletter to showcase education programmes and policy achievements (MoBSE, 2020, 2021).
- high resource mobilisation and donor coordination capacity amidst high munificence and social capital (high support from international and local donors and community-based and driven self-help and education value expansion initiatives such as the Mothers Clubs) (UNICEF, 2006, 2009).
- implementation of public value expansion programmes in response to its evolving business environment and stakeholder expectations (Boin et al., 2020) including areas outside its core mandate such as health education, organising career fairs for students (MoBSE, 2021); local sourcing of food items for the World Food Programme sponsored school feeding programme to increase market access and livelihoods of local farmers (ActionAid, 2021) and successfully lobbying the Public Service Commission for the creation of a mechanism (Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers) to expedite the teacher appointment and promotion of teachers (Public Service Commission, 2013).

- introduction of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) management in 2013 to eliminate all levies at lower basic, upper basic and senior secondary levels in government and grant-aided schools (MoBSE, 2011; 2017; Barma et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the researcher's familiarity with and ease of access is a key consideration for selecting The Gambian Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education for this study. Given the cultural, political, economic and historical (colonial) similarity of African countries, results from this study may enable generalisation to African countries more widely and Postcolonial South Asian countries to some extent.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis contains six chapters. **Chapter 1** positions the thesis into the broader strand of inquiry of contextual influences in public management. It does so by critically examining the applicability, influence and mutual relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management on decision-making in MoBSE. This was informed by key gaps in the public management literature. These include the absence of empirical studies on Weberian bureaucracy's applicability (presence and influence), a western-originated, ideal type of bureaucratic organisation on decision-making in African public bureaucracies, including the education sector and its key drivers and inhibitors. This study is also motivated by the need to assess the mutual relationship between the Weberian model of bureaucracy with strategic management, a field of scholarly enquiry (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). This is because these two seemingly incompatible public management concepts (Torfing et., 2020) co-exist in many public administrations and organisations, including MoBSE.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed and critical review of the relevant public management literature focusing on Weberian bureaucracy, the underpinning theoretical framework, its various concepts and debates, including arguments for and against its continuing relevance and effectiveness as a public sector management concept. It also introduces relevant literature on strategic management, especially the various schools as identified and elaborated by Mintzberg et al. (1998) and Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) and some brief review of the academic literature on context (including the politico-administrative and cultural dimensions) and decision making due to their centrality to this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and methods that the study used. Among others, it explains and justifies the researcher's choice of subjectivism, critical realism, case study methodology, selection of MoBSE and qualitative data collection and analysis approaches, including purposive sampling, interviews observations, archival and qualitative thematic and narrative strategies. It equally discusses how ethical issues were managed and fieldwork challenges and lessons learned.

The study findings and discussion, informed by the study data: interviews, observations and archives and the researcher's experience of the Gambia and case study organisational context, are presented in **Chapter 4**. It is comprised of six largely interconnected subsections, namely: Case study country, The Gambia and organisation, MoBSE context (4.1). The presence of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE (4.2), Drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE (4.3), Influence of Weberian bureaucracy on the decision-making processes of MoBSE (4.4), The explanatory power of theories of strategic management in understanding the decision-making processes of MoBSE (4.5) and Complementarity; alternative explanations of decision-making processes: Weberian bureaucracy with strategic management (4.6). Section 4.1 highlights how key colonial and political events and structures, such as the high concentration of political power in the Gambian presidency and the leadership approach and preferences of the former regime, shaped and influenced the Gambian education system and consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. It also explains how the demographic, cultural, economic, and legal set-up and realities of the Gambian society and differences with the West, and its former colonial master, Britain, may affect the applicability of the above approaches. The section concludes by providing a detailed evolution and organisation of the Gambian education sector and system and some performance statistics compared to its West African counterparts. Section **4.2** comprehensively examines the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy. To achieve this, the presence and operation of principles characterising the Weberian bureaucracy were detected using empirical evidence (participants' interview accounts and observations): these overarching principles have been identified as: official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation; graded authority and hierarchy; merit-based system; official communication through the written file; rule and procedure-based operations; and permanent/protected employment (Weber 1964), . The somewhat moderate presence

of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE indicates that it is possible to find features of Weberian bureaucracy in a former British colony and an African setting. **4.3** identifies and explains Weberian bureaucracy's key drivers and inhibitors in MoBSE. Among others, the findings from this section provide insights into how contextual factors, notably societal and administrative culture, politics, and colonialism, influence the applicability of foreign-originated management logics in an African public sector setting. Focusing on how Weberian bureaucracy shapes the decision-making processes of MoBSE, findings in **4.4** showed that due to varying contextual influences, including politics and culture, MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy (Doty et al., 1993). This qualifies Weberian bureaucracy theory by indicating how incorporating local culture, political and economic realities made the case study organisation more effective. The section concludes by providing a framework of how the contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy found emerged. Findings reported in **4.5** indicate how and why the strategic planning approach to strategic decision making is the most predominant strategic management approach in MoBSE and how it explains its decision-making processes. The final findings section, **4.6** indicates the coexistence of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management (strategic planning approach) and their complementarity in decision-making. However, the study findings also reveal contradictions and paradoxes in their implementation and relationship. This section advocates a nuanced rather than polarised conceptualisation of these theoretically incompatible management concepts.

The concluding and current chapter: **Chapter 5** summarises this thesis's main findings and conclusions, including how the research questions were addressed. It also includes this thesis's key theoretical and policy contributions, its limitations and areas for future research, and an overall conclusion. These key findings, conclusions and contributions are:

- It is possible to find features of Weberian bureaucracy in a former African British colony.
- Weberian bureaucracy is relevant in heterogenous societies and less developed democracies and useful in shielding public bureaucracies from political, donor and stakeholder interference.

- MoBSE morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy due to its quest to exploit the benefits of adopting Weberian bureaucracy's principles and the need to incorporate local culture for increased cooperation from stakeholders.
- Despite hindering the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy, certain cultural norms and practices such as joking relations and social ethics improved MoBSE decision making. These findings qualify the bureaucracy theory.
- Contrary to the view that colonialism is the main driver of Weberian bureaucracy in former British colonies, this study show that it equally constrained the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in the Gambia in general and MoBSE in particular through its indirect rule system.
- Rather than being incompatible, theoretically, the relationship between the Weberian model of bureaucracy and the strategic planning approach to strategic management in the decision-making processes of MoBSE indicate complementarity and mutualism.

The section ends with a graphical illustration of the thesis structure and summary findings.

2.0 Literature review

This chapter discusses the key concepts and theoretical frameworks underpinning this study: Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management and their relationship on the decision-making processes of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of The Gambia, a non-Western, developing African country and under-researched context. Aside from Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management, other relevant literature considered includes context and decision-making. Further to discussing the meanings and key debates on these concepts, this chapter identifies the gaps in the public management literature and potential contributions of the thesis to the public management literature in general and theory of context, Weberian bureaucracy, and strategic management in particular.

The next section discusses the concept context, its key debates and gaps in the literature.

2.1 Keys concepts and frameworks

2.1.1 Context: meaning, perspectives, levels and metaphors

Context is arguably one of the most widely used, debated and misunderstood concepts in the management field because it means different things to different people. This plurality in the meaning of context stems from differences in ideology and interests (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Virtanen, 2013), interpretation of phenomena by different academic disciplines (Dilley, 1999) and levels of knowledge (Virtanen, 2013). These different views regarding context are evident from the definitions, metaphorical representations, and nature (levels and aspects) of context as presented by various authors.

Context is borrowed from the Latin word 'Contexere' which means to weave or join together (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2018, n.a). While Dilley (1999, p.4) explains that the above meaning of context has evolved to mean various things, including "the parts which immediately precede or follow a particular passage or text and determine its meaning" and "circumstances relevant to something under consideration", many scholars' especially supporters of the pluralist camp's views including its multifaceted nature and the need for a holistic approach in its application still conforms to its original meaning of joining or weaving various parts into a single whole.

Consistent with above fact that it means different things to different people based on their ideology, academic discipline and level of knowledge; notable management scholars conceive it as the “situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior as well as functional relationships between variables” (Johns, 2006 p.386), “the circumstances, environment, background or settings which affect, constrain, specify or clarify the meaning of an event” (Christensen and Laegreid, 2013, p.132) and to interpret, make a connection or disconnection between an object and its surroundings (Dilley, 1999). Whilst totally subscribed to Johns (2006) definition of context, O'Toole and Meier (2014) also concurs with Ferlie and Ongaro's (2015) perspective that it is multifaceted and multi-layered, thus warranting a holistic approach to its study and application. From the above definitions, it is evident that context is a very broad concept. Although two main perspectives of context: universalism and culturalism exist and have dominated the academic discourse, a third, growing and perhaps more effective way of understanding the influence of context is the mid-way approach. As opposed to universalism and culturalism, which strongly advocate the relevance and use of generic approaches across public sector settings and the use of tailor-made/bespoke recipes for each public administrative setting, respectively; the mid-way approach supports contextualisation for improved applicability and effectiveness of foreign originated and sector-oriented management approaches in recipient public administrations or organisations. Dilley (1999) notes that context as a concept is often invoked or used to refer to an analytical strategy that advocates contextualisation rather than universalism and generalisation.

As regards the nature and similarity of context to environment, two main perspectives have dominated the literature. Whilst the singularism camp regard it to be the same as environment - the immediate enabling and constraining factors of an organisation and the most important in any strategy and change process (Peters, 2013), those in the pluralism camp believe that it is broader than the environment (Pollitt, 2013; O'Toole and Meier, 2014). Arguments put forward by the pluralists to support their stance include, among others, that the environment (technical) is a subset of the wider context, which should be interpreted in its entirety – multiple and intersecting dimensions and factors, rather than in piecemeals. While inductive and qualitative are better than deductive and quantitative strategies in contextualisation (Pierre, 2013), a

general agreement exists among authors in the pluralism camp that context needs to be defined each time it is used, theorised and operationalised to enhance understanding among different individuals and groups (Pollitt, 2013).

Despite the above agreements, key differences exist among authors in the pluralism camp based on the nature, level of importance, influence, and impact of context in organisations. Whilst very important, contextualism, one of the four world hypotheses, it is a constraint for generalisation (Virtanen, 2013) and its persistent use leads to extreme relativism, a weak philosophical position (Scharfstein, 1989). Context – tasks, influences organisational structures, processes, and attitudes and activities of actors; and rules in complex adaptive systems (Bovaird, 2013) and thus helps to explain and clarify why actors pursue certain goals (Boudon, 2014); is dynamic in its effects and a performance enhancer if properly managed (Pollitt, 2013); animates action but its multiplicity and heterogeneity often lead to overestimation and underestimation (Clarke, 2013) and is shaped, re-shaped and reinterpreted by organisational actors and even academics (Newman, 2013; Peters, 2013). Problems from conflicting contexts can be resolved through holism (Bouckaert, 2013); cultural analysis (Hood, 2013), factoring time and causality in and micro-level factors (Ongaro, 2013), and attending to interpretive practices of other disciplines, cultures and places (Dilley, 1999). This is because the above resolution mechanisms are paramount to understanding the impact and outcomes of context (Hood, 2013; Ongaro, 2013).

As regards the levels of context, some moderate-to-significant differences exist in the literature. O'Toole and Meier (2015) consider it from three broad dimensions: political, general and internal. Pollitt (2013) and Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) categorise context into: organisational, cultural, ideological, temporal, spatial; factual, conceptual, public management reforms in the country/sector, political and economic. Political context is concerned with the concentration of political power in a public administration (e.g., unitary vs federal (corporatist or adversarial)) (O'Toole and Meier, 2014). While focused on the key aspects of the general external context: turbulence (degree of uncertainty), complexity (degree of stakeholder heterogeneity), munificence (availability of opportunities including resources) and social capital due to its importance in enabling support and collective action for the realisation of organisational goals (O'Toole and Meier, 2014), others emphasise a more holistic approach in analysing the external context by including national culture; past and

prevailing economic conditions (e.g. challenges of managing under scarce resources for MoBSE); temporal - one-off or regular events or incidents that trigger action in a certain direction (For The Gambia, this includes periods immediately before and after elections when most public organisations introduce and try to lock-in policy and legal changes); the dominant public administrative logics such as strategic planning in the Gambian public service (ideological); realities of MoBSE, such as being the oldest, largest and one of the highest performing public service organisations (factual); the types and impacts of public management reforms such as structural adjustment programme in the early 1980s and Gambia civil service reform in 2008 and, of course, the impact of time and space on the evolution, management approach and performance of polities and organisations (Pollitt, 2013; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

The internal or organisational context constitutes all those aspects or happenings that are within the control of organisational leaders and stakeholders. Peters and Waterman's (1982) 7S framework (strategy, structure, skills, staff, systems, style and shared values) provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the internal environment of an organisation in general and its culture in particular. O'Toole and Meier (2014) focused on and buttressed the importance of goals (whether clear or ambiguous), professionalism (degree of expertise) and hierarchy (degree of centralisation) on an organisation's management approach and performance. Regarding the internal context of MoBSE, its jurisdiction and goals are largely clear, and it is highly professionalised and hierarchical (despite its high geographical decentralisation due mainly to the presence of regional education directorates and cluster monitoring structures across the country). While MoBSE's internal environment is conducive to implementing Weberian bureaucracy, it could hinder collaborative modes of governance, including strategic management. The consolidation of the above management logics may also be affected by other contextual factors including national culture and stakeholder influence, especially international donors, due to MoBSE's high dependence on them for budget and programme support (MoBSE, 2016).

To enable in-depth analysis and understanding of the various contexts highlighted above, specific sub-contexts were isolated and studied at the international, national, sectoral or organizational level. Painters and Peters (2010) notion of administrative cultures supports the generalisability, to a limited extent, of certain strategic

management frameworks based on cultural similarities and sometimes geographical location at an international level. However, it overlooks some key factors in the areas of policy development processes and involvement mechanisms (consensual) in some parts of the world - Germany and Finland (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

The rather confusing and general misunderstanding of context has led some authors to use various metaphors to simplify the concept and to portray their orientations/stances. It is an elephant (Mintzberg et al., 1998), the missing link (Pollitt, 2013), a garment (Cuoco, 1806, cited in Newman, 2013), an environment (Scharfstein, 1989), a frame (Goffman, 1974), a background and perspective (Hobart, 1985) and may be regarded as a backdrop by some scholars and practitioners (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Based on strong evidence from their research work and professional experience, Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) posit that context affects the strategic space of an organisation and emphasises the importance of autonomy of public organisations, politico-societal expectations and obligations and accountabilities to the public. They argue that for strategy-making to take place, public organisations must first gain some of level managerial and financial autonomy - reduces the negative effects of control and micromanagement from political sovereigns and short-term, self-centred and reactive behaviours among organisations stakeholders; second, the strategy that emerges from this autonomy should meet the expectations/needs of its constituents or specific publics and third; the management of the strategy should specify the organisation's obligations and accountability mechanisms to its stakeholders. Overall, contextual studies must analyse the causal mechanisms and processes and effects/outcomes of the phenomena being investigated (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) and should ensure effective theorisation of contexts and generalisation of results from country comparisons of similar policies and processes (Pollitt, 2013). Moreover, these outcomes should be in the form of empirically observable and acceptable statements, problem-dependent and evolving (Boudon, 2014).

Given that this study focuses on the influence of cultural and politico-administrative contexts on the decision-making processes of MoBSE, these two contextual dimensions are discussed further in subsections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 below.

2.1.2 Cultural context

Definitions

Aside from political context, which has the greatest influence on the management approach, strategic space and performance of central-level public organisations (O'Toole and Meier, 2014), culture (national and organisational) is perhaps the second most important societal and organisational contextual factor for public organisations (Cameron and Green, 2009; Hayes, 2014). As with context, various authors have offered various definitions of culture based on their academic and professional orientations. The two public management disciplines that have had the most influence on culture are anthropology and sociology.

Culture can be defined as “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups [...] the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values: culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of future action” (Adler, 1993, p.29). Schein (1990, p.111) defines culture as the “the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel concerning those problems.” The above definitions of culture indicate that internal and external organisational factors shape organisational culture.

Hofstede's (2011) dimensions of national cultural differences (power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity and uncertainty avoidance) could be useful in understanding the reasons for the high or low consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management in MoBSE. For instance, high power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and high collectivism among Gambians and education sector stakeholders may enhance the adoption and entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy (graded hierarchy and authority and procedure and rule-based operations) and strategic management (especially collaborative) modes), respectively.

Perspectives and levels of culture

The main perspectives of organisational culture are managerialist (functionalist) and critical – further divided into symbolic-interactionist, conflict, and feminist sub-perspectives (Bratton et al., 2010; 2020). While adopted by sociologists, the mainstream view of organisational culture; managerialism, advocates deliberate culture management for the attainment of corporate goals (Bratton et al, 2020). As opposed to sociologists, anthropologists regard organisations as cultures (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) provide three related perspectives to the macro and organisational culture relationship: management by culture (culture and values influence attitudes and behaviours), culture by management (management/organisational leaders determines culture) and compromise-view (culture and management and mutually reinforcing).

Culture is manifested at three main levels: artefacts (visible culture including symbols, language, dress code, buildings, rituals, ceremonies, norms, practices etc.); shared-values or beliefs (second level of culture and invisible but shapes behaviour and attitudes) and basic assumptions (third level of culture that is highly invisible, unconscious, implicit, taken for granted and highly resistant to change) (Schein, 1990, Bratton et al., 2010, Cameron and Green, 2014)). Although more organisational oriented, Johnson and Scholes (1992) cultural web (stories, symbols, rituals and routines, organisational structure, power structures and control systems) and (Waterman and Peters, 1982) 7S framework (strategy, structure, skills, staff, style, system and sharedvalues) provide a similar but more detailed description of the constituents of culture and how it can be managed especially in periods of change. Their overlapping elements of culture are customs, norms and practices. Customs or mores are norms and taboos that prescribe social requirements and behaviours and their violation often leads to punishment (Frese, 2015). Violation of norms especially taboos is usually punishable. Practices are routinised and embedded behaviours due to adherence to norms over a period of time (Frese, 2015). Some national cultural practices that might promote or hinder the adoption and consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management practices include social ethics, castes (social stratification among and within members of an ethnic group), patriarchy, joking relationships (mutual behavioural conventions, obligations, and stereotyping by patrilineage, origin and ethnicity), communal or extended family system and traditional

rituals and ceremonies including initiation (into adulthood) and marriage ceremonies. For example, initiation and wedding seasons among some ethnic groups and communities usually affect school attendance. While adolescent males must attend these adulthood transition initiation ceremonies for a week or two (used to be a month or more in the past), females serve as bridesmaids in their relatives wedding ceremonies. At the sector and organisational level, the researcher will examine how cultural values and practices are managed and how these in turn impact the consolidation of the above management logics.

Types of organisational culture

Goffee and Jones (1996) provide a framework for analysing an organisation's dominant culture. Their four culture types are networked, fragmented, mercenary, and communal. Similar organisational cultures: clan, market, adhocracy and hierarchy were espoused by Cameron and Quinn (2006). Clan or communal cultures are family-like and emphasise/are high on sociability and solidarity (Ouchi, 1980; Cameron and Quinn, 2006). The similarity between networked and market cultures is their highly innovative and entrepreneurial nature. Hierarchies and to some extent, fragmented cultures, resemble bureaucracies as they are highly rule and task/goal oriented and low on solidarity and sociability.

Ouchi's (1980) transactions cost approach specifies the circumstances under which markets, bureaucracies and clans become the preferred and more efficient mechanisms of control and decision-making in organisations. These conditions include low performance, ambiguity and high goal congruence for markets, moderately high-performance ambiguity and goal incongruence for bureaucracies and high-performance ambiguity and low goal incongruence for clans. While he further notes that these three modes of control can exist in various degrees within the same organisation, he clarified that clan cultures rely largely on traditional authority as opposed to legal-rational authority in a bureaucracy, do not require explicit auditing and evaluation but through subtle recognition of performance expectations possible among clan members. The above is aided by adequate information for learning and production, and addresses the low quality of decision-making (inability for rules to adequately cater for all possible contingencies in bureaucracies due to high complexity and uncertainty) (Ouchi, 1980). He further argues that while the transaction cost of clans is lower than in bureaucracies, the realisation of those mentioned above and

other benefits of clans can only be realised through a lengthy and undisrupted socialisation process.

Since the Gambian basic and secondary education sector comprises three main service providers: government, grant-aided and private, it is expected that the prevalence of above three modes of operations or mediation will vary across these service providers. For example, clan modes of decision-making are likely to be more pronounced in grant-aided and private schools, especially Madrassah as most of them are family and community-owned. In addition, hierarchy and fragmented; and adhocracy and networked cultures could promote bureaucratic and strategic (entrepreneurial) modes of operation and decision-making, respectively.

Given that public organisations operate within a broader societal context and culture (Peters, 2018); the ability of some African public bureaucracies, including Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, The Gambia, and local councils in Sierra Leone to thrive despite their challenging operational contexts (Barma et al, 2014) coupled with inadequate and concrete evidence on the impact of national/societal culture on public organisations (Peters, 2018; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), this study will examine the impact on national and clan culture on the decision-making processes in the Gambian primary and secondary education sector.

Framing the cultural context

Borrowing from (Kroeber and Kluckhohn in Adler, 1993) definition, Bouckaert (2007) analysed cultural contextual dynamics based on scale and level: macro, meso, micro and nano. The macro level concerns international and national administrative structures and policies; time horizons including the interrelatedness between past, present and future; space; language and human geography and their influence on public management actions and changes. At the meso level, importance is placed on how the administrative and professional cultures affect public organisations. In the case of the Gambia and MoBSE, this will include how features of Postcolonial African administrative structures and systems (Painter and Peters, 2010) and ethical requirements stipulated by the Professional Standards Board for Teachers and Teacher's Service Commission for the validation of teachers' qualifications and their appointment, reward and discipline (MoBSE, 2018). Meso-level contextual analysis and theorising are advantageous over other levels because they promote both

generalisation of findings across similar contexts while retaining the contextual uniqueness of the original case (Pollitt, 2013). Micro cultural analysis focuses on how organisational culture influences and impacts public organisations (Bouckaert, 2007, Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). While tend to exist among various organisational departments or units, nano or sub-cultures and sometimes counter cultures tend to be more pronounced in highly decentralised organisations especially those with divisional structures (Bratton et al., 2010). Counter cultures tend to emerge when sections of an organisation are or feel alienated by the corporate culture and thus leads to resistance or even sabotage (Cameron and Green, 2014; Hayes, 2014).

Regarding how to analyse the relationships between culture and management: management by culture (idealistic); culture by management (materialistic) and culture by management and management by culture, this study adopts the third approach, which supports the view that culture and management interact and influence each other (Bouckaert, 2007). Although takes a micro (organisational) level of analysis for improved contextualisation, this study will equally examine the impact of The Gambia's national (macro), public service administrative and professional (meso) and MoBSE's (nano - various education service providers and dispersedly located stakeholders) cultures on its decision-making processes.

2.1.3 Politico-administrative context

O'Toole and Meier (2014) consider political context as the most important contextual factor for public organisations since they are under the dictates of their political masters. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) used structure, culture and function, key features of political and administrative systems, to propose five ways of analysing the impact of politics and public administration on public management reforms and governance in general. They are state structure, nature of the executive at the central level, the relationship between politicians and senior bureaucrats, dominant administrative culture and diversity of main channels of diffusing public management reforms.

Structure of the state

The structure of the state looks at the degree or level of concentration or vertical dispersion of power or authority and horizontal coordination of central government (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Painter and Peters, 2010). This ranges from highly centralised or unitary political systems, where key decision-making takes place at the

top (such as in the executive and parliament) to federal systems where power is highly shared between different organs of the state (Lijphart, 1999; 2012). In relation to The Gambia, it is a unitary state and political power highly concentrated in the presidency and executive. In addition, the level of decentralisation of authority from central government to local authorities and from ministries to agencies is relatively low.

The Gambia is a multi-party democracy with a presidential system of government and unicameral parliament. Elected public officials include the President, most of the national assembly members, mayors/chairpersons of area councils and ward councillors. However, despite being elected and responsible for the same geographical scope/local government area, chairpersons of area councils are answerable to the regional governors (appointed), an anomaly that seems to be peculiar to The Gambia.

The National Assembly is comprised of 53 elected and five nominated (by the President) members. Although the nominations aim to ensure adequate representation for vulnerable groups of the society including the youth; people living with disability; and women, this constitutional provision and opportunity for the nomination of national members tends to be misused for political gains. As regards the domination of coordination of government programmes at the central level, Ministry of Finance and Economic affairs, Office of the Secretary General (head of the civil service) and Policy Analysis Unit of the Office of the President play a leading role in policy development and coordination. This high centralisation of political power coupled with MoBSE's status as a central-level public service organisation, puts it under direct control and potentially, higher political interference from the presidency. This has implications for the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management.

Nature of executive government

Concerning the nature of the executive at the central level, The Gambia has been dominated by single-party majority type of government since gaining independence from Britain in 1965. The People's Progressive Party (PPP) and Alliance for Patriotic, Re-orientation and Construction (APRC) had clear majorities in parliament from 1965 – 1994 and 1996 – 2016, respectively. The Constitution and, of course, Parliament, was suspended from July 1994 to September 1996 following the military coup and

transition led by former President, Yahya Jammeh. This would change to a minimal-winning coalition in January 2017 when a new regime, constituted by a coalition of seven parties and one independent candidate, defeated Jammeh in the December 2016 and April 2017 presidential and parliamentary elections, respectively. This would, however, turn into a minority cabinet due to disagreements among coalition members and their dismissal from cabinet and other senior government posts. The prevailing political (presidential) and electoral (simple majority winning criteria) systems and the failure of the National Assembly to pass the Draft 2020 Constitution has denied The Gambia of progressive constitutional provisions such as introducing a 10-year term limit, 50% majority for presidential elections and more checks on presidential powers including on the appointment and dismissal of senior public officials. The above and coalition formation among its registered eighteen political parties during the recently concluded presidential (4 December 2021), in which the incumbent's party, National People's Party (NPP) won a landslide. However, significant gains by the opposition in the April 2022 parliamentary elections has resulted in a minority cabinet. Results from the upcoming 2023 local government elections and maintenance of first-past-the-post (simple majority winning criteria) voting system could help either side consolidate their gains and power. The impact of these new styles of governance (minimal winning coalitions or minority cabinets) is likely to lessen control over and interference with bureaucracy while increasing their autonomy for strategy making. Also, it may lead to more consensual or collaborative modes of decision-making.

Politician-bureaucrat relations

The above two features of political and administrative systems, which vary greatly across the globe have a great bearing on the politician-bureaucrat relationship (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Painter and Peters, 2010). The cordiality and effectiveness of this relationship could be determined by answering among others, the following questions: Are civil service HR processes highly politicised and are their tenure secured or not? Are civil service and political careers separate or integrated? (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Painter and Peters, 2010). In response to these, the researcher will focus on the level of politicisation and security of tenure of senior civil service positions as this could help clarify why the adoption of a Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management may be enhanced or problematic. Although reduced significantly since change of government in 2017, the Gambian civil service is still

prone to politicisation. This is enabled by the high concentration of power in the presidency and his ability to hire and dismiss senior civil servants and senior members of the judiciary such as the Chief Justice and judges of the High Court without parliamentary approval. This is made possible for senior civil servants because heads/members of key public service organisations, including the Public Service Commission and Office of the Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service, are all political appointees who can also be dismissed at will by the President. This phenomenon may contribute to the politicisation of and political interference in Gambian public organisations and lowering of senior bureaucrats' tenures. These factors are theoretically not conducive for the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy (low or non-adherence to legal and policy stipulations) and strategic management (lower autonomy for effective strategic management). Section 2.2.2 (Politics and Bureaucracy) discusses the politician-bureaucrat relationship in detail.

Administrative tradition (culture)

Administrative tradition - also referred to as administrative culture, historical legacies, cultural-institutional context (Yesilkagit, 2010) was first coined and espoused by Martin Painter and B. Guy Peters in 2010. Confusion exists between administrative and state traditions. However, efforts have been made to clarify these and associated concepts. Yesilkagit (2010, p.148) define administrative tradition as “ideas and beliefs about the nature of government in a specific national context and institutions and structures of government that are created in the past and encoded in the present institutional constellation”. State tradition is the overall “framework of values within which public life should be conducted and with the effective exercise of public authority in the pursuit of those values” (Dyson, 1980, p.271). It is thus evident from the above definition that administrative tradition is a subset/derivative of state tradition (Christensen, 2003). Although several to many variants of administrative tradition may coexist (Kickert, 2003) or become more prominent at different times (Rhodes, 2005, cited in Painter and Peters, 2010), they all tend to draw from a single administrative tradition (Yesilkagit, 2010). Explanations for this observed persistence of public management approaches or traditions include historical institutionalism (1992; Bezes, 2010; Bouckaert, 2007; Hofstede, 1984; Dyson, 1980; Painter and Peters, 2010).

The above and other empirical studies across the globe culminated in the classification of countries into Anglo-American, Napoleonic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Latin

American, Postcolonial South Asian and African, East Asian, Soviet and Islamic based on commonalities in their administrative culture (Painter and Peters, 2010). Despite the existence of families and variants within various administrative traditions, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) note that most tend to conform to the Rechtsstaat or Anglo-Saxon (public interest) models. They further explained that in states operating the Rechtsstaat system (e.g., France and Germany), the state plays an integrating role in governance and promulgating and enforcing laws, its civil service tends to be trained in administrative law and public servants and citizens actions are assessed against these body of laws. On the other hand, in the public interest-driven states (e.g UK and Australia), the state has a weaker role in society as the executive and senior bureaucrats are accountable to the legislative and the citizenry. Because of the above, The Gambia fits more into the public interest administrative culture as the National Assembly is constitutionally mandated to scrutinise activities of the executive and public organisations. Hence, they must submit and present their audited financial and activity reports annually to the National Assembly for review. Besides, the National Assembly can summon any public official including the President to appear before it.

However, while the scrutiny of annual financial and activity reports has been greatly adhered to in practice, the dominance of the single-party majority type of government over the most part of The Gambia's post-independence period has meant that the President and most senior government officials were largely spared of such means of accountability. Nevertheless, it important to note that rather than focusing on the above dual lenses, incorporating additional perspectives such as Hofstede's (2001) cultural differences may yield better results in understanding administrative culture of public administrations (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011)

Main channels (sources) for public policy advice

As with other governments worldwide, The Gambia's development and public service policy management has been influenced by various local and international development partners. While the World Bank and European Commission have been the main source of policy reform advice to developing countries and Eastern Europe, the OECD was the most influential in Western Europe (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Apart from the World Bank and European Commission, other key public sector development aid and policy advice providers to The Gambia include the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), DFID, Commonwealth Secretariat, Islamic Development Bank (more prominent in the education and health sectors) and international consultants (UK and US in particular. For example, the DFID funded BESPOR project helped introduce participatory stakeholder and performance management approaches in MoBSE. While the IMF's influence is obviously in the areas of shaping macroeconomic policy and structural reforms, the Commonwealth Secretariat has been actively engaged in improving electoral governance. For the IDB, some possible policy reform influences are likely to be in the areas of curriculum development including the integration of Islamic education into the conventional education system. Given the diversity of administrative cultures and state structures of these development aid and policy advice sources, this could impact the adoption and consolidation of various modes of governance, including Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management in MoBSE.

2.1.4 Gaps in the context literature and potential contributions

Despite the importance of context to public management and social anthropology, minimal attention and work has been accorded to the topic (Pollitt, 2013; Dille, 1999). Although some large scale international comparative case studies (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2003; Painter and Peters, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011; Pollitt, 2013; Peters et al., 2015; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017) have increased academic knowledge and understanding of context, the volume of context literature and theories is generally low. Besides, African countries and public administrations (with South Africa as an exception) have been largely underrepresented in the public management context literature (Dasandi and Esteve, 2017; O'Toole and Meier, 2014). Of the few context-based studies conducted in Africa, a significant proportion revealed that most western originated management concepts and models are incompatible with the African context. These include Kimani's (2017) findings that Kenya's Anglo-American originated corporate governance code was incompatible with the country's institutional environment due to among others, powerful traditional norms and culture, weak regulatory environment and economic uncertainties and Mbalyohere's (2016) conclusions that the deployment of heterogeneous corporate political activity strategy by multinational enterprises in the Ugandan electricity industry was due to challenges of getting locally embedded, institutional fragility and an evolving political environment.

Given this significant gap in the public management and context literature and the importance of contextualisation for effective public sector management, this research aims to make an empirical and theoretical contribution to the context and public management literature by examining how MoBSE's politico-administrative and cultural contexts enable or hinder the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy, a Western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation and selected theories of strategic management, a growing field of scholarly enquiry.

The next section (2.2) discusses the concept of Weberian bureaucracy, the underpinning theoretical framework of this study, with a view to understanding its relevance and importance for effective public management.

2.2 Weberian (ideal type) bureaucracy

Bureaucracy has been proliferated globally as a form of societal organisation through colonialism (Max Weber Stiftung, 2021). It is thus one of the oldest management approaches utilised by public, non-public, formal and informal organisations and popularised by Max Weber through his work on Weberian or ideal-type bureaucracy. Although among the most widely used words in organisation studies and discourse, bureaucracy has multiple meanings. It generally refers to bureaucratic structure and decision-making - hierarchical and rule-oriented, (Downs, 1967; Torfing et al., 2020) and the quality and professionalism that differentiate bureaus from other organisations (Downs, 1967). "Bureaucracy refers to the systematic use of norms, rules, standardizations and/or categorizations that aim to produce and legitimize rule. Bureaucracy is often associated solely with the state and specially trained administrative elites. Bureaucratisation processes are almost ubiquitous and by no means limited to state structures. Bureaucratic practices are not only carried out, imposed and / or staged "from above", i.e., within state institutions and administrative systems, but also "from below" in the everyday life of non-state actors, such as in associations, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), churches, in trade, in cooperatives, etc., invented, challenged and reformulated (Max Weber Stiftung, 2021). It also generally refers to public servants and the extremely complicated management rules, procedures, and processes they administer (Torfing et al., 2020).

Max Weber is the founding father of Weberian or ideal type bureaucracy. It was born from his quest to address social unjust political and bureaucratic systems and practices of his native country, Germany and the western world. These include his

resentment of father's patriarchal and domineering attitude; Germany's authoritarian and particularistic institutions; his high sense of integrity including requesting to be dismissed and demoted from his professorship to lecturer when he could no longer execute his functions adequately due mainly to mental health issues; his disdain for capitalism and its contribution to a high level of inequality, especially the waste of human lives in the American society during his visit to the United States; his experience from serving as a commissioned disciplinary and economic officer responsible for managing and eventual transformation of nine hospitals in Heidelberg area in Germany to ordered bureaucracies during World War I; and his great admiration and inspiration from the structure of the Prussian state, which was the closest to and significantly influenced his conceptualisation of ideal type bureaucracy theory to promote merit-based bureaucratic and democratic systems in Germany and the Western world.

Weberian bureaucracy/bureaucratic authority emphasises rationality, permanence of structure and a formal system of rules to satisfy measurable and recurrent needs (Weber, 1964). Other types of authority identified Max Weber and replaced by his ideal type are patriarchal (traditional) and charismatic. While the bureaucratic structure and authority is mirrored from patriarchy and are both concerned with the daily routine, they vary in their leadership and orientation towards societal needs. In a patriarchy, the patriarch is the natural leader and focuses on economic areas that can be satisfied through a daily and normal routine (Weber, 1964). Charismatic authority also known as transformational leadership (Bass et al., 1987) is fundamentally different from the other types of authority mentioned above and an antithesis of bureaucratic authority, is more prevalent in non-routine situations such as periods of political, economic and psychological distress (Bryman, 1992; Weber, 1964). Rather than relying on formal structure and rational system of rules for their authority and functioning, Weber believes that charismatic leaders derive their authority from charisma – supernatural gifts of the body and spirit to inspire and command obedience and action from their followership/subordinates to accomplish their missions. He further notes that as opposed to patriarchal and bureaucratic structures which are based on rational economic gains, charisma except for warrior heroes, is sustained through gifts, donations, voluntary contributions and leader-based structures.

The ideal type of bureaucracy is a mental representation, in its conceptual purity, of how organisations should be organised and thus such organisations may not exist in reality (Weber, 1964; Ongaro, 2020). However, its value lies in its usefulness for comparative purposes - single or multiple real case study organisations against the ideal type characteristics and the case study organisation. Moreover, its normative value (can make things better) could be a motivator for improved performance among organisational leaders and staff. This is because organisations closer to the ideal type are considered more efficient and effective owing to their specialised knowledge and technical superiority over other forms of organisation (Weber, 1964). Due to the above benefits and the important role of public bureaucracies in decision-making, coupled with the fact that they bear the largest responsibility for the implementation of government decisions (Donald and Rosenbloom, 2015), increased knowledge about Weberian bureaucracy and its impact on public administration could positively impact public service performance.

Fundamental principles of Weberian bureaucracy include formal and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation; graded authority and hierarchy; meritocracy; office management through the written file; rule and procedure-based operations, and permanent/protected employment (Weber, 1964). Although the written file criterion has been overtaken/replaced significantly by technological advances (Dunsire, 1978), its original intent of record keeping for incremental learning, efficiency and verification purposes has not been rendered redundant. See Table 2.1 for the corresponding values and benefits of the above Weberian bureaucratic principles. Concerning the public sector, Weberian bureaucracy's principles, especially the rule-based and graded authority and hierarchy, takes many forms including between politicians and bureaucrats, among bureaucrats, between bureaucrats and citizens and politicians and citizens (Torfing et al., 2020).

Building on Max Weber's work, Downs (1967) espouses the following four primary characteristics of a bureaucracy: it is large; most of its staff are employed on a full-time and long-term basis; their pay from the organisation constitute most of their income; recruitment, promotion and motivation is merit/performance based; and most its outputs are not assessed by markets external to the organisation through reciprocal means. In a bid to reconcile the above and other meanings attached to bureaucracy,

Dunsire (1978, p.x) offered the following definition: “an organisation which employs hierarchy of authority and division of jurisdiction internally, with an output consisting mainly of marks on pieces of paper, and externally accountable for its internal processes as well as its output performance and impact”. From the above definition and following Weber's ideas about bureaucracy, it is evident that bureaucracy refers to all large and complex organisations across sectors including the private and third sector. Although the above cross-sectoral concept about bureaucracy is widely accepted, it is often mistaken for public bureaucracy, which as clarified by Goodsell (2005), refers to all government departments at all levels and forms² and public servants responsible for regulatory matters and operated at the public expense.

Woodrow Wilson's (1887) politics-bureaucracy dichotomy and Morgan's (1980; 1986) machine metaphor are perhaps the closest theoretical concepts to Weberian bureaucracy. However, ideological differences exist between these great scholars regarding the orientation and importance of their thoughts. While Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson focuses on organisations and their features and functioning and agree on the need for a separation between politics and bureaucratic principles of formality, professionalism, hierarchy and meritocracy, Wilson and Morgan disagree with Weber's view that the ideal-type bureaucracy, a mechanistic management approach, is the most effective way of running a bureau and shielding it from politics (Sager and Rosser, 2009). Wilson and Morgan convergence stem from their recognition of the organic approach to managing organisations. However, as opposed to Morgan's view that the machine and organism approaches are among the many ways in which an organisation can be represented and managed, Wilson firmly believes in the organic development of organisations especially public bureaucracies and its importance in the maintenance of healthy relations between administration and politics (Sager and Rosser, 2009).

Weber's bureaucratic principles and corresponding values and behaviours – bureaucratic ethos, have implications for effective public service delivery. The following table identifies each principle's rationale, aspirational values, and behaviours.

²Executive, legislative, judiciary, headquarters, field office, individual agencies or unified administrative jurisdiction like those local government.

Table 2.1: Max Weber's bureaucratic principles and corresponding values and behaviours

Principle	Rationale	Required Values and Behaviours
Official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To ensure authority and legitimacy over functions and roles. ✓ To avoid or significantly minimise role conflict among organisations and functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Specialisation ✓ Expertise ✓ Stability/order
Graded authority and hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To ensure an ordered system of subordination and ability for lower-level staff and citizens to appeal the decisions of a lower office to a higher one. ✓ To ensure gradual progression and secure the existence of staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fairness ✓ equity of treatment of users ✓ Stability and order
Merit based reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To promote and ensure professionalism and effective service delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Professionalism ✓ Competence ✓ Efficiency/effectiveness
Office management through the written file	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To ensure accurate records of office activities/transactions in the original or draught form for future reference, incremental learning, and continuous improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Impersonality ✓ Accuracy ✓ Learning/Continuous improvement/organisational memory ✓ Accountability
Rule and procedure-based operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To ensure clarity, accountability, and curb excessive tendencies arising from ambiguity and discretion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accountability ✓ Equity/equality ✓ Fairness ✓ Neutrality
Permanent/protected employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To ensure shielding from interference and total commitment of staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Commitment ✓ Effectiveness

Source: Weber (1964)

2.2.1 General concept of politicians and bureaucrats

In many jurisdictions, politicians are enabled to take public office directly or indirectly. Directly through general elections (e.g., The Gambia, and United States of America) and parliamentary elections where the winning party forms the government (e.g., Britain and Japan). Indirectly through a hierarchical electoral system (mainly through the People's Congress) as in the Republic of China and through a tribal-based patriarchy such as in the United Arab Emirates. In line with the definition of bureaucracy, a bureaucrat refers to a person who works full-time, and long-term for a large organisation whose human resource policy, including recruitment, promotion, and reward is significantly based upon performance/merit³ and whose own output is not externally evaluated by through voluntary reciprocity – waiting for rather than demanding rewards for work done or kind actions (Downs, 1967).

The recruitment, promotion and other human resource-related processes of a bureaucracy vary according to the political system and administrative tradition of a country (Politt and Bouckaert, 2011; Du Gay, 2005). While Napoleonic and Confucian traditions emphasise merit and seniority in their public service recruitment processes, others including Postcolonial South Asian and African, Islamic and Latin American tend to be highly politicised and clan-based (Painter and Peters, 2010, Bratton and van de Walle, 1994;1997).

Bureaucrats can be classified into various categories based on their organisational category and role. They are either senior-level bureaucrats – responsible for central-level policy implementation coordination and supervision; middle/lower-level bureaucrats – responsible for direct policy implementation or street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010) – cuts across organisational categories with some significant level of discretion in policy implementation. As opposed to senior-level bureaucrats who are largely detached from the citizenry, unfamiliar with local contexts and tend to adhere strictly to the policy dictates of their political masters, street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010) and lower/middle-level bureaucrats are very much in tune with local contexts. However, the dual role of street-level bureaucrats (an intersection between policy implementation and formation) is a key contributing factor to the policy-outcome gap - exposes the challenges of public policy implementation due to the need to adhere to

³ A bureaucrat must not be an elected official, and his tenure must not be linked to elected officials.

organisational policies while exercising autonomy and discretion in policy implementation (Lipsky, 2010).

Although the tenure of bureaucrats has become somewhat unstable over the recent past due to among others, impacts of public management reforms and the changing nature of political and democratic systems, their careers are nevertheless more stable than their political masters' – usually temporal and short-term especially in advanced democracies with term limits (Hanstad and Skille, 2008, Goodsell, 2005). Bureaucrats are expected to be neutral (non-partisan and apolitical) in executing their roles (Weber, 1946; Cheng and Lee, 1996). However, this has been the exception rather than the norm in many political settings, particularly autocratic regimes and political systems without term limits. Although a country's political system influences the role of politicians and bureaucrats, the general belief and practice is that they are responsible for policy evolution and implementation, respectively (Wilson 1887). However, academics including Dunsire (1978), du Gay (2000), Goodsell (2005), Peters (2010; 2018), firmly disagree with this and other traditional dichotomies of politics and bureaucracy/administration. They regard politics and bureaucracy as not only complementary, but also that bureaucrats play a significant role in policy formation through the provision expert and local knowledge, drafting of legal and policy texts and engaging in bureaucratic politics.

Given the important role of these two public sector stakeholders and the need for a mutual and fruitful working relationship, the following section discusses how and what shapes the politician-bureaucrat relationship in different political and administrative settings and how this impacts public service performance.

2.2.2 Politics and bureaucracy

A range of contextual factors influence the politician-bureaucrat relationship. These can be political (Meier, 1997; Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2004; Maravic and Peters, 2015, O'Toole and Meier, 2015) administrative/cultural (Bouckaert, 2007; Painter and Peters, 2010) and public management reform models/trajectory (Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2011) and organisational (Bouckaert, 2007, Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, O'Toole and Meier, 2015).

The structure of the state (degree of centralisation and horizontal coordination) and the nature of executive government (Lijphart, 1999, 2012) directly impacts the level of

political control over bureaucracies. Political power is generally higher in highly centralised states (e.g., France, UK) and single-party executive governments and parliaments with an absolute majority (Lijphart, 1999, 2012; Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2011, O'Toole and Meier, 2015). From an administrative tradition/culture point of view, political control tends to be higher in organic, law-oriented, politicised, low societal/stakeholder involvement, post accountability, highly uniformed and low autonomy systems (Peters, 2008; Painter and Peters, 2010). As regards the dominant public management trajectory, Weberian and New Public Governance assume a higher decision-making power for politicians and bureaucrats respectively (Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2011).

O'Toole and Meier (2014) categorise contextual organisational factors into three dimensions: goal clarity and consistency, professionalisation and centralisation. The extent of these factors in an organisation could be used to predict the relationship between senior and lower-level staff and between the organisation/bureaucracy and political institutions. Owing to the positive impact of high organisational goal clarity and coherence, professionalism and decentralisation on corporate performance (O'Toole and Meier, 2014) and citizens satisfaction - something that will always be welcomed and utilised by politicians for political gains; political control and interference tends to be lower for public organisations with high positive scores on the above features. Furthermore, it is very natural that senior bureaucrats who recognise the value of autonomy and implement organisational involvement practices are more likely to advocate for and devise strategies to increase their independence from political institutions.

While it is generally understood that bureaucrats in dictatorial regimes would engage in politically motivated activities or execute illegal policy directives from politicians, there is a general tendency for bureaucrats across countries and parts of the globe to tow politician's path. These unbureaucratic tendencies and phenomena could be understood by mirroring the politician-bureaucrat relationship to the superior-subordinate relationship in an organisation. A subordinate obeys or tries to impress his superior because the latter controls or influences rewards, punishments (including dismissal) and privileges. Besides, he possesses the authority and power to administer the above motivational factors. Failure on the part of the subordinate to work or act under the dictates and wishes of his superior may lead to restricted access

to available rewards and privileges and dismissal (Dunsire, 1978). It is, therefore, reasonable to postulate that 'politician-dependent bureaucrats' – those who are appointed and can be dismissed at will by politicians, will by default be passively loyal to them. The above situation thus leads to the inference that the more politicised the recruitment of senior bureaucrats (especially if highly disregarding merit/competence), the higher the political control over bureaucrats. Additionally, the exclusive occupation of the law-making (parliament and local government councils) and endorsement (presidency and governorate) institutions in most countries by politicians makes it much more likely and easier for them to institute laws and policies that will serve their political interests including the perpetuation of their dominance over bureaucrats.

Another dimension of understanding the degree and reasons for politicians' influence over bureaucrats in any given polity is to analyse the values and motives and types of bureaucrats. Downs (1967) identified the following types of bureaucrats:

1. Purely self-interested: internally focused rather than organisational or societal-oriented. These are sub-divided into:
 - a. Climbers: aim to increase their power, income and status through enlargement of their existing positions, promotion and searching for better jobs in other organisations.
 - b. Conservers: seeks to maintain the status quo due to preserve their status
2. Mixed-motive: seeks to maintain the status quo due to preserve their status. They are categorised into:
 - a. Zealots: loyal to narrow policies or concepts – seek power for its own sake and to advance their preferred policies.
 - b. Advocates: Loyal to broader organisational goals but also seek power to increase their influence.
 - c. Statesmen: Loyal to the broader society and general welfare of the citizenry but seek to influence important organisational and national policies.

While acknowledged that the above categories of bureaucrats are influenced by an individual's personality, the nature of the position he/she holds and the likelihood of

achieving his/her goals (Downs, 1967); it is obvious that statesmen – those thinking and living the ideal-type bureaucrat's values, are more likely to resist high, illegal and unethical political control and excesses than other types of bureaucrats. However, a critical evaluation of the literature on public choice and economic theories of bureaucracy including Down's (1967) and Niskanen's (1971) works by Dunleavy (1991) has faulted their views and claims that senior bureaucrats are more concerned and focused on the achievement of self-interested goals (power, pay, prestige, convenience, security, loyalty to group, mission-commitment, etc.) and bureau expansion (budget maximisation). Further to his belief that senior bureaucrats are intrinsically motivated, Dunleavy argues that public sector systems limit senior bureaucrats' quest to pursue personal gains by directing their energy and efforts into work and policy-related issues.

Owing to the above gaps and based on a different standpoint and empirical considerations, Dunleavy (1991) espoused the 'bureau-shaping model' to provide a more realistic representation and useful insights on the administrative behaviour and goal-orientation of bureaus. These behaviours and goals include:

- Internal and structural reorganisations: expansion of policy-level tasks, personnel and systems while reducing, enclaving and distancing of existing routine functions from senior management through such as hiving-in of inconsistent functions into separate departmental agencies or units.
- Transformation/redesign of internal work practices into more interesting tasks; increase decision-making time horizons and discretion policy control; insulation from sponsor body, rival bureaus and external partners through deployment of more sophisticated management and policy analysis systems; move towards more high-level and professional staff including their status, work content and career advancement.
- Redefinition of relationships with external partners through hands-off and autopilot of ordinary matters while increasing discretion in policy management through corporativism, minimises their dependence upon external organisations and expands their patronage of external bodies where it promotes their organisational image.
- Competition with other bureaus for programme tasks and policy areas while trying to export troublesome and costly low-grade tasks to rivals.

- Load-shedding, hiving-off and contracting out inconsistent non-core/routine functions to sub-central or sub-national governments or closely supervised quasi-government agencies and contracting of ancillary functions to private firms through competitive bidding to reduce personnel related routine costs.

Aside from affecting the politician-bureaucrat relationship, the above highlighted contextual factors directly or indirectly impact organisational and national performance.

Having explained and clarified the concepts of bureaucracy, bureaucrat, politics and politicians and the likely impact of their relationship on public service delivery and highlighted the growing wave of opposition to bureaucracy, this section discusses the hot and lingering debate about its continuing relevance and effectiveness as the ideal mode of running organisations.

2.2.3 Is Bureaucracy and bureaucratisation as bad as it is portrayed and perceived?

Bureaucracy and bureaucratisation tend to be perceived negatively – hierarchical, legalistic, authoritarian, impersonal, unresponsive, etc. (du Gay, 2000, 2005; Meier and Hill, 2005; Peters, 2018; 2010). These negative and sometimes derogatory representations of bureaucracy are perhaps better summed up in one of its earliest critic's, Crider's (1944, p.27) description of a bureaucrat: "he or she is anybody in government who is (1) obnoxious, and (2) who forgets that they are working for the people, and not the people for them" and his reference to those offered by encyclopaedias to describe the traditional bureaucrat: "he is the official of a department or government bureau who loves red tape, worships routine, and is scared to death of new ideas".

The above notions about bureaucracy are fuelled and aggravated by:

- the willingness of the public to embrace unsubstantiated claims against bureaucracy (du Gay 2005; 2009).
- academics - originators and advocates of public policy reform approaches including New Public Management, public governance and networks (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004).
- politicians (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; du Gay, 2005).
- the broadening of schools of strategic management from the social sciences (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

- other modern public management reform models dispersal agents including country of origin governments (e.g., the United Kingdom and the United States), development agents such as the DFID, OECD, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) and big international consulting firms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Salaman, 2005).

The earliest and most prominent supporters of public bureaucracy include Anthony Downs. Downs (1967) argues that due to the suitability of bureaucratic institutions in providing vital social services, it will be practically impossible to eliminate public bureaucracies in contemporary society. Reasons advanced to support his claim include:

- the ability of public bureaucracies to provide collective services like security and indivisible benefits to citizens through coercion and enforcement.
- the ability of public bureaucracies to redistribute income and wealth among the public through affirmative policies and action.
- the need for public monopolies to protect the public.
- the need to establish and maintain public sector institutions for consumer protection purposes.
- compensation for aggregate instabilities or deficiencies in a market economy.
- to enable the provision of vital services such as research to key but disorganised sectors such as agriculture.
- the need for public agencies to provide reasonably priced and equal treatment to citizens in its dispensation of law and order.
- the need to maintain the government.
- the need for nonmarket action in settlement conflicts arising from increasing complexity in society.
- the need for an increase in the average size of bureaucracies due to rising population and demand for public services.
- increase in the bureaucratic workforce due to declining employment rates in nonbureaucratic organisations.
- increasing shift to public goods and services in wealthier societies.

For Dunsire (1976) and du Guy (2000) the failure of critics of bureaucracy to appreciate it is due mainly to the fact that they are evaluating it with wrong lenses – lack of or

inadequate understanding and appreciation of the bureaucratic ethos and evaluating it based on objective/goals it was not originally set out to achieve.

Du Gay (2000) identified three main strands of antibureaucratic sentiments:

1. Those against its activities – hierarchical, legalistic, procedural, inflexible, inefficient, wasteful, etc.
2. Those against its level of moral values and ethics: one-sided instrumental rationality as it marginalises the emotional, personal and private aspects of the human person; and
3. Those against bureaucratic organising forms and in favour of modern management approaches.

The following sub-sections review arguments against and for bureaucracy.

2.2.3.1 Activities of bureaucracies

Activity or task-based antibureaucratic sentiments vary and cover aspects such as recruitment, accountability and performance, creativity/innovation, etc. While critics of the recruitment and performance management approach of bureaucracy call for a shift from traditional ways of thinking and managing performance input measures (qualifications, experience, personality, etc.) to competence-based⁴ performance management, doubts exist regarding the effectiveness of competences and post accountability measures in enhancing performance due to their ambiguity and subjectivity⁵ (Salaman, 2005). As regards innovation, flexibility and stakeholder involvement; it is considered constraining, isolating to stakeholders, promotes silo mentality and mediocrity and thrives on emergency (Crider, 1944), contributes to more rules and incompatible with most strategic management models (Crozier, 2009). Goodsell (2005) work supported by concrete empirical evidence from other studies revealed that bureaucracies in general and public bureaucracy have exhibited more favourable ratings on the aspects above than political and non-bureaucratic organisations.

In countering the perception and assertion that the scope of expertise in bureaucracies is narrow and limited (Crider, 1944), du Gay (2005) asserts that they are versatile due to the high skills variety bureaucrats derive from their multiple roles

⁴means of predicting capability and regulation and task definition to manage performance.

⁵ Relies on managers willingness and commitment to achieved defined performance.

of administration, politics, diplomacy, entrepreneurship. Furthermore, critiques of bureaucracy particularly those that regard it as inefficient, wasteful (Crider, 1944) and low paying are believed to be economically and politically⁶ motivated and that high-powered incentives in the public sector compromises their loyalty to the system (Ambruster, 2005).

2.2.3.3 *Organising forms and management approach*

Bureaucratic institutions are considered highly unsuitable for the current unstable, uncertain and rapidly changing environment and thus need to adopt more adaptive and entrepreneurial organisational forms and approaches such as NPM, public governance and networking (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Crider, 1944) and are more concerned about form and process than substance or content (Crider, 1944). Its advocates on the other hand, strongly argue that it is the only organisation form and public management system that has and continues to withstand the test of time (Du Gay, 2002; 2005; Bogason, 2005; Meier and Hill, 2005; Peters, 2018); it is a flexible, evolving and diversified organisational device (du Gay, 2000; Kallinikos, 2004). Contrary to the view that bureaucracies cannot handle complexity issues, evidence indicates that these issues are inherently inbuilt in bureaucratic structures (Holmes and Sunstein, 1999) and thus the best way of managing them (Jaques, 1976).

As opposed to the notion that bureaucracy is single or universal, research across the globe has revealed that contextual factors including political and administrative settings have contributed to varying bureaucratic forms including hybrids (Painter and Peters, 2010; Peters, 2018; du Gay, 2005; Hoggett, 2005; Thompson and Alvesson, 2005; Newman, 2005) and is nonreducible due to the high skills variety of public servants (du Gay, 2005). Despite these variances in bureaucratic forms, there is a need for some level of hierarchy/centralisation to enable political control and accountability (Goodsell, 2005). For Goodsell (2005), the public bureau is becoming indispensable due to its professionalism, accountability and ability to integrate different civil actions into comprehensive and coherent public policy.

Further evidence against the negative impact of modern modes of organising from the British public service include:

- the high suppression of ethics and moral values (Hoggett, 2005).

⁶ The assumption that market-based solutions are more democratic than public administration.

- tensions and contradictions from policy implementation and service delivery due to the multiplicity of governance regimes.
- subordination of localities, reduced control and bureaucratic ethos due to neutrality/impartiality and the adoption of output-oriented network-like structures, transformational leadership despite high stakeholder diversity (Newman, 2005).

Contrary to the assertion that bureaucratic institutions especially those in developed countries are inefficient, less flexible, less responsive, less innovative, less inclusive, change-averse and are a less effective governance tool (Crider, 1944, Mises, 1944), the following examples from Goodsell's (2005) work revealed that bureaucratic institutions generally outperformed their political counterparts and other non-bureaucratic institutions on all the above performance aspects:

- Instead of the private sector and institutions with non-bureaucratic forms of organising, the roots of the information age can be traced to US bureaucratic institutions such as National Bureau of Standards, National Science Foundation, MIT and NASA.
- A 2002 study on the legislative process in the UK by Edward Page (Goodsell, 2005) revealed that rather than being recipients and implementers of policies and regulation, middle-level bureaucrats played a significant role in drafting and influencing the adoption of bills by politicians. Furthermore, the policy decision to invade Iraq by Bush and Blair was influenced by bureaucrats (CIA agents and White House staff).
- Bureaucratic institutions and bureaucrats (Director, Department of Emergency Management and Fire Commissioners) rather than politicians (Mayor of New York) spearheaded the response to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre.
- Regarding the aspects of response governance, and citing from several studies, bureaucrats were sensitive to political directives and policies, more receptive to change than politicians and staff in non-bureaucratic organisations, more committed to democratic rule and tolerant to free speech, externally focused through the utilisation of wide-ranging stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

For some, increasing findings against bureaucracy is due partly to the fact that many actors including organisational leaders try to position themselves and their organisations in a favourable antibureaucratic camp (Thompson and Alvesson, 2005). While urging critics to conduct an in-depth exploration of practices in different sectors and sections of organisations rather than just focus on dichotomies⁷, they advised advocates of bureaucratic structures/systems against exaggerating its benefits (Thompson and Alvesson, 2005). Similarly, Mises (1994) warned against using private sector principles to assess the performance of bureaucratic institutions as bureaucratic principles are necessary for effective performance.

The above rebuttals against antibureaucratic sentiments are perhaps summed up in du Guy's (2009) argument that bureaucracy would have been totally rejected and disbanded by politicians and citizens if it were as bad as its critics claim. For him, it remains the most effective way of implementing critical functions of government in the twenty-first century and beyond.

Although not completely against the policy reform camp especially NPM, some scholars are skeptical of claims that NPM, intended to replace bureaucracy, has been institutionalised and transformational (Pollitt, 2004; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Others lamented the irony of NPM as it has resulted in more bureaucratic procedures, high staff, and low accountability through contracting to the private sector (Meier and Hill, 2005). While recognised the seemingly active and integrative role of the UK NPM approach, they decried the inconsistency of the American model (Meier and Hill, 2005).

This section analysed views and evidence in favour and against bureaucracy. Overall, there is some strong support for bureaucracy as an ideal mechanism for managing organisations. While generally anti-bureaucratic, new public management thinking such as representative bureaucracy and contemporary democracy lends some support to bureaucracy in general and Weberian bureaucracy in particular. This is discussed in the following section.

⁷ Mechanistic vs organic, central vs decentralised, etc.

2.2.3.4 *Representative bureaucracy and contemporary democracy as evidence in support of bureaucracy*

Donald Kingsley (1944) coined the term representative bureaucracy in 1944 following his study on the makeup of the British civil service and the impacts of underrepresentation of key sections of the British society, especially women. It is concerned with and advocates that the public workforce should be representative and reflect the diversity of its citizenry for improved public service delivery as their diverse interests are considered during decision-making (Kingsley, 1944; Dolan and Rosenbloom, 2015). A derivative of bureaucracy and intended to mimic the benefits of political representation, representative bureaucracy further supports the importance and relevance of bureaucracy, particularly in heterogeneous and socially polarised societies including Africa. Even though politicians often use it to advance their self-interested goals such as garnering political support from opposing and minority sections of the society, representative bureaucracy through affirmative action is effective in addressing ethnic, gender, religious, racial, geographical and other societal imbalances and thus reduce politicisation of the public service (Peters et al, 2015; Maravic and Peters, 2015; Meier and Morton, 2015). It is credited with helping to address South Africa's apartheid induced political instability through affirmative action legal (constitutional) and policy measures to address the low level of representation of the majority black population and women in decision-making positions in its public service (Cameron and Milne, 2013). However, given that it may erode equality and fairness principles the ideal-type was set out to achieve, bureaucratic representation should both be purposive and merit-based.

As opposed to the dominant view that the roles of politicians and bureaucrats are antagonistic (Peters, 2010; Wilson and Barker, 2003; Drometer, 2006; Holbrook, 2016; Pierre et al., 2017; Dasandi and Esteve, 2017), contemporary democracy underscores their complementarity and peaceful coexistence for effective public service delivery (du Gay, 2000; Cheng and Lee, 1996; Peters, 2010). While the dominance of bureaucrats by politicians in centralised political systems is generally endorsed by the citizenry (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000), the existence of a clear role boundary between political institutions and bureaucracy, high bureaucracy legitimacy among the public due to among others, their ability to ensure equality among the citizenry, will make any attempt at discrediting or disbanding it futile. Furthermore, there is growing empirical

evidence that bureaucrats significantly influence or dominate politicians on some occasions and under certain conditions.

Declining public participation in party and national politics due to growing distrust in politicians and weakening political structures/emergence of lone politicians (Peters, 2010) and the growing role of street-level bureaucrats has increased the visibility and significance of bureaucrats in contemporary public organisations (Peters, 2010).

Despite the huge and growing evidence supporting Weberian bureaucracy, the important role of organisational politics and bureaucratic politics in particular has posed some serious challenges to Weberian bureaucracy theory. Referred to as *The Politics of Bureaucracy* by Guy Peters (2018), the following subsection introduces and explains how this concept and bureaucratic behaviours may hinder the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy.

2.2.3.5 The politics of bureaucracy

Organisations, like political parties, are engaged in politics at the organisational level to influence organisational and even national policy decisions and outcomes. Bureaucratic politics has increased significantly over past decades due to increasing organisational complexity and diversity and tend to be more pronounced during periods of change (Hayes, 2014) and in organisations that are highly decentralised with distantly located sections/units. Thus, highly geographically decentralised public bureaucracies such as education ministries – due to the need for their presence and some level of autonomy at the sub-national level, often lead to the development of sub-cultures and sometimes counter-cultures (Bouckaert, 2007; Bratton et al, 2010; 2020) to enable the pursuit of group and/or self-interested goals (Niskanen, 1971; Downs; 1967). While agrees that the bureaucracy competes especially when their primary mandate and interests are endangered, Peters (2018) strongly believes that they are still are a force to reckon with.

Peter (2018) provides a comprehensive analysis of public bureaucratic politics. He asserts that politics in public bureaucracies is manifested in its various functional areas and processes including policy/strategy management; recruitment; budgeting; administrative accountability and bureaucrat-politician relations. This is driven and promoted by such as the politics-bureaucracy doctrine and dichotomy as its strict adherence enables bureaucrats to engage in covert bureaucratic organisational

politics for the advancement of their organisational and personal agenda while being exonerated of any negative effects of their actions. He further identifies four types of bureaucratic politics: administrator-minister relationship; administrative lobbying; budgeting and accountability; and clientele support, based on a cross-classification of the formality and internal-external (policy-survival) dimensions.

While the formal sub-dimensions focus on administrator-minister relationship and budgeting & accountability, the informal: administrative lobbying clientele support are concerned with the relationship between bureaucracy and its key stakeholders: pressure groups, political parties and other informal groups who try to influence or with whom bureaucrats rely on in policy management including programme and budget justification. Peters (2018) notes that these informal relationships can be legitimate or illegitimate. Legitimate through such as corporatism, networks, clientela (when a bureaucracy regards a pressure group as the natural representative of a particular social sector), parantela (when close ties exist between a pressure group and sitting government or dominant political party and enables indirect influence of bureaucracy). On the other hand, those that are illegitimate are not recognised by government/bureaucracy but continue to advocate their agenda through calm and legal means or illegal and violent means.

Since politics including organisational and bureaucratic politics are alternative decision-making logics and largely non-bureaucratic, the presence and high utilisation of the above modes of bureaucratic politics may hinder the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in the case study organisation.

The above section (2.2) provided a detailed review of the literature on bureaucracy including its importance for public management. Given that MoBSE is a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy (see Section 4.4) and the need to provide alternative explanations to the case study organisation's decision-making processes, the following section reviews relevant literature on strategic management, a field of scholarly enquiry that has witnessed a high proliferation and applicability in the public sector over the past decades and its promise for improved public sector performance.

2.3 Strategic management

Public administration is a multidisciplinary field and draws heavily on many disciplines especially economics, political science, public policy, and organisation science (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Strategic management, a relatively new management discipline has witnessed a high proliferation (Llewellyn and Tappin, 2003) and enhanced applicability in the public sector over the recent past (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). This is due mainly to public sector stakeholders' quest to replicate the performance effects of strategic management in the public sector and the transformational effects of public management reforms over the same period. These reform impacts include among others, the adoption of private sector-like structures and management approaches such as output based accountability; agencification, decentralisation, marketisation and participatory mechanisms, including new public governance and networking (Peters, 2010, Bouckaert and Politt, 2011; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, Bouckaert, 2007). Furthermore, many public-sector oriented strategic management models have emerged over this same period (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

While strategic management provides complementary and supplementary explanations to public management phenomena (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), the literature on these phenomena including politics and bureaucracy is still dominated by the above disciplines. Notable among these is the principal-agency theory – which originated from industrial economics and adopted and adapted by political scientists to describe/explain relations between politicians (principals) and bureaucrats (agents).

As with context, there are multiple perspectives of strategy. These various and often conflicting views of strategy has created confusion and perhaps a nightmare for academics and practitioners until Mintzberg et al. (1998) came to their rescue. Although private sector-focused, their holistic view of strategy, including comparison and applicability of their schools of strategic management: design, planning; positioning; entrepreneurial; cognitive; learning; power; cultural; environmental; and transformation and configuration, to organisational contexts, has contributed immensely to our understanding of strategy. Therefore, it is not surprising that strategy definitions tend to reflect one, more of all the above perspectives. Table 2.2 below, provides the most popular and widely accepted definitions of strategy.

Table 2.2: Definitions of strategy by various authors

Definition	Author
“Strategy is the great work of the organization. In situations of life or death, it is the Tao [path, route or principle] of survival or extinction. Its study cannot be neglected.”	Sun Tzu (544 – 459 BC), cited in Grant, 2021)
“Art of a general, from French <i>stratégie</i> and directly from Greek <i>strategia</i> [office or command of a general], from <i>strategos</i> [general, commander of an army]”.	(Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021a)
“The determination of the long-term and short-term desires of an organisation including the formulation and implementation of those activities/actions to attain the desires.”	Chandler, 1962, cited in Johnson et al., 2020, p.5
“Pursuing a unique, inimitable, cost-efficient, customer satisfying but profitable business move.	(Porter, 1996)
“A pattern in a stream of decisions.”	(Mintzberg, 1998)
“The long-term direction of an organisation.”	Johnson et al., 2020, p.5
“The long-term planning and decision-making activities undertaken by managers that are related to meeting organisational goals.”	Bratton et al., 2010, p.12
“The total pattern of decisions and actions that influence the long-term direction of the business.”	Slack et al., 2019, p.74

Mintzberg (1998) and Johnson et al. (2014) take a more comprehensive view of strategy as they capture strategy’s deliberate, logical, and emergent patterns. Concerning where the responsibility for strategy lies in an organisation, some scholars believe that it lies with the organisational leaders or senior management (Sun Tzu (544 – 459 BC, cited in Grant, 2021; Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021b; Bratton et al., 2010). Regarding its origin, Online Etymology Dictionary (2021b) reveal that it originated from the military, one of the oldest public sector institutions. This contradicts the somewhat widely held notion that strategy is a private sector-originated management concept. Despite the above differences among these scholars, there is

a general agreement that strategy is concerned with the long-term direction and future survival of an organisation.

Organisational strategy can be broadly categorised into three levels: corporate, business and operational (Johnson et al., 2014; Slack et al., 2013). To ensure increased effectiveness, an organisational strategy needs to be comprehensive and aligned (Johnson et al., 2014; Slack et al., 2013), concise to ease understanding and implementation by stakeholders (Collis and Rukstad, 2008) and context specific (Cameron and Green, 2014; Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2013, Pollitt, 2013; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

The strategic management process can be divided into three phases: formulation, implementation and evaluation (Johnson et al., 2014; Thompson and Strickland, 1998). While an organisations' long and short-term objectives and strategic actions are determined during the formulation stage, strategy implementation (execution) concerns the actualisation formulated strategies including providing the necessary ingredients such as leadership, systems, structures and policies (Johnson et al., 2020; Chemwei et al., 2014; Danaee et al., 2011). The third and final phase; strategy evaluation ensures that strategy implementation is continuously monitored, and periodically evaluated and corrective action taken where and when required (Johnson et al., 2014; Danaee et al., 2011; Thompson and Strickland, 1998).

However, other authors contend that the strategy management process is better grouped into four stages: formulation, implementation, monitoring and control (Slack et al., 2013). This was achieved by further dividing the evaluation stage into monitoring and control. This is because they believe that monitoring should focus on tracking the implementation of planned activities, generating early indicators and taking corrective action at an operational level. Strategy control on the other hand is all about ensuring alignment with the strategic environment and addressing the usual problem of strategy ambiguity and comprehensiveness.

While the strategic management process is generally challenging, the implementation stage is usually the most challenging (Kalali et al., 2011; Komingoi, 2011; Wernham, 1985). Therefore, there is a need for contextualisation and flexibility in the strategic management of organisations in general and public organisations in particular as their contexts are too complex and in constant change. Hence, an organisation's strategy

should serve as a guide and not something to be rigidly adhered to realise organisational aspirations (Stacey, 1995, 1996; Mucai et al., 2013)

Regarding its level of importance among others critical business issues such as leadership, sustainability, globalisation and human resource management (Thompson, 2014); strategic management is considered the most important organisational issue as the success and failure of organisations depend on it (Johnson et al., 2014; Khan and Kalique, 2014; Kalali et al., 2011; Stewart, 2004). This is because decisions arising from it are made at the highest organisational levels and integrates all organisational processes for improved goal attainment (Economic Commission for Africa, 2003) and has organisation wide impact (Kalali et al., 2011). Furthermore, its contribution to improved performance (Grant, 2021; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) makes it even more important for the public sector due to its vital role in providing basic development services and a conducive environment for all sectors of the economy to perform optimally (Economic Commission for Africa, 2003).

Given their private sector origin and orientation, Mintzberg et al.'s (1998, 2009) schools of strategic management need contextualisation for effective application to public sector settings (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Pollitt, 2013). Despite this, there is strong evidence that strategic management models designed for service delivery in commercial organisations are more suitable to the public service organisations than their public sector manufacturing counterparts (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). However, new strategic management perspectives have emerged over the past three decades. These include resource-based-view (Wernerfelt, 1984; Harvey et al. 2010), strategy as process (Pettigrew et al., 1992), corporate governance (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Ferlie et al., 1996), public value school (Moore, 1995; Benington and Moore, 2010), strategy as practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005; 2009), network-based and collaborative (Ferlie et al.; 2013; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) and Anglo-governmentality (Miller and Rose, 2008). Whilst the emergence of public sector-based models including the public value approach and Anglo-governmentality has offered promise for addressing strategic management issues in the public sector, the availability and rate of proliferation of these public-oriented and contextualisation of private-oriented models is still quite low.

Due to the growing influence of strategic management in the public management field, the distinctiveness of public sector settings in general and developing country contexts in particular (Bouckaert and Pollitt 2011, Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015), the positive impact of strategic management on organisational performance (O'Toole and Meier, 2014) and the seemingly lack of empirical evidence on the proliferation, applicability and influence of strategic management (various schools) on decision-making in African public organisations including education settings, warrants some further research. Further to examining the presence, drivers, inhibitors and influence of Weberian bureaucracy, this study assesses the presence and influence of strategic management on the decision-making processes of MoBSE and its complementarity to Weberian bureaucracy.

2.3.1 Schools of strategic management

This section provides an overview of various schools of strategic management based on the ideas of Mintzberg et al. (1998; 2009), Ferlie and Ongaro (2015), Ongaro and Ferlie (2020) and of course, their founding authors and leading advocates. However, this review will focus on schools of strategic management that are moderately or highly applicable to public settings. These include the design, planning, learning (includes the emergent perspective), entrepreneurial, cultural, resource-based, strategy as process, network-based and collaborative, strategy as practice and public value schools (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). It is important to note that while the Anglo-governmentality school is public sector-oriented, it is more applicable to advanced neo-liberal states like the UK (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) than The Gambia, a postcolonial African developing country context. Hence, its exclusion from the review.

2.3.1.1 Design school

The earliest among the schools of strategic management, the design school emerged in the early 1960s and was influenced by the works of strategy pioneers especially Chandler (1962) and Ansoff (1958) on corporate structure including its relationship with strategy. It generally focuses on the fit between the internal (capabilities) and external (opportunities and threats of an organisation and thus, relies on PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological, Legal and Ecological) SWOT (strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, considered the granddaddy of strategy analysis frameworks, to analyse the organisational environment (Mintzberg et al, 1998). Once this is completed, the next step involves

formulating and evaluating alternative strategies and selecting the best for implementation.

The design school emphasises the need for deliberate approach to strategy formation, strategies to be kept simple, the important role of the organisational leader (strategist) in strategy-making. Its limitations include excluding or relegating other organisational staff and external stakeholders, experience (learning), viewing strategy-structure and strategy formation and implementation relationship from a deterministic rather than integrative approach and promotes rigidity rather than creativity and flexibility in the strategic management process. Thus, relevant contexts include high leader competence, existence of adequate and accessible organisational data/information and during periods of major organisational reorientation or inception (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

2.3.1.2 Strategic planning school

The strategic planning school builds on the design school and thus exhibits many of its features including the organisational leader's responsibility for strategy-making and separation of strategy formation from implementation (Mintzberg, 1998; 2009). However, differences exist between the two. As opposed to the design school, strategy formation in the planning school is more formal and participatory as its implementation (usually the most challenging phase of the strategic management process) is dominated by middle-level staff (*ibid*). Key features of this school include the existence of formal strategy management structures and functions (e.g., policy and planning departments/units and planning cadre) and use of budgeting, operational and scenario planning (*ibid*). Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) note that scenario planning promotes creativity, flexibility and adaptability. Besides the features mentioned above, the existence of long-term strategic and monthly, quarterly or annual work/operational plans are perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of the strategic planning school. Overall strategic management decision-making can take the following form: total control, minimal or final (hybrid) approval from headquarters (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

A thorough review of the literature revealed that strategic planning was initially adopted by the French (central government), Americans (Defence Department) and British (NHS) public sectors in the 1960s before its proliferation in the private sector before

its eventual collapse in the 1970s (Mintzberg, 1998; 2009; Ferlie and Ongaro). Their study findings indicate that its failure was due to several factors including its inability to cope with growing and shifting requirements (informational, political and economic) of a rapidly changing environment, low responsiveness to changing situations and people issues such as psychological and emotional stress during the Vietnam war.

2.3.1.3 Entrepreneurial school

In contrast to centralised and formalised approaches (design and planning in particular) to strategy management, the entrepreneurial approach focuses on the circumstances and role that organisational leaders – founders in particular, play in strategy-making. Most prevalent in start-ups, the founder/leader (entrepreneur and strategist) is driven by intuition and experience, has a clear sense of direction and able to recognise and exploit opportunities by taking calculated risks and transformative change and equally dominates the strategic management process (Mintzberg et al., 1998; 2009). It is also prevalent in SMEs, NGOs, social enterprises, emerging industries and novel human services settings (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). This is enhanced by high formal authority and autonomy in public service organisations.

Although mostly dominated by the leader, there could also be other organisational members at various levels – mostly middle-level, that are equally visionary and innovative (Mintzberg et al., 1998; 2009). The strategy process is generally transformational and results to many structural changes. There is a generally high overconcentration of power in the leader and thus leading to weak delegation, succession planning and sustainability (Mintzberg et al., 1998; 2009). However, Bernier and Hafsi (2007) argues that its importance in the early life cycle of an organisations stems from the fact that it could contribute to the establishment of a common sense of purpose and direction and thus reduce sustainability issues due to high dependence on the founder and poor succession planning.

A related concept or perspective of the entrepreneurial school is blue ocean strategy/innovation developed based on findings from a study of 30 industries and 150 new and unique businesses including Cirque du Soleil (Kim and Maubourgne, 2004). A striking feature of blue ocean strategy is the ability of organisations to sustain high profitability for ten to fifteen years in the face of high competition and uncertainty before real competition is felt by simultaneously pursuing differentiation and cost efficiency (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005) and thereby defying Porter's (1980) logic that this can

only be achieved by focusing on either business strategies. As with entrepreneurial school, it places high importance on the role of effective organisational leadership including the ability to recognise and exploit business opportunities (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005; Hayes 2014) and the need for strategy formulation and execution to be done simultaneously (Kim, 2005). Although there is general belief that blue ocean innovation is market/industry/context specific - more relevant to the private sector and IT and telecommunications industries, (Parvinen et al, 2011; Thompson, 2014), its founders and advocates are of the view that it is applicable across sectors/industries/contexts (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005; Park et al. 2011).

The most relevant empirical study is Pettigrew's (1979) study on the role of the founder (in this case, first headteacher) in a British (Scottish) boarding school. His findings did indicate the very important role of the school's first headteacher in establishing a strong culture and vision for the school. As regards the public sector, Ongaro and Ferlie's (2020) study on strategy making on the European Aviation Safety Agency indicates that under certain conditions (in this case, high formal authority, founder related advantages, visionary and risk-taking and long tenure), the entrepreneurial school can be highly applicable and performance-enhancing. However, these were based on an Anglo-American administrative cultural (Painter and Peters, 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011) and a private sector (boarding school) and supranational European (European Aviation Safety Agency) settings, which generally provide high autonomy for organisational leaders to engage in effective strategy-making. Given that MoBSE is a central-level public organisation and a larger proportion of primary and secondary schools in The Gambia are government owned, this study may provide insights into how the entrepreneurial approach to strategy formation unfolds in a non-Western developing country public and education sector context.

2.3.1.4 Learning (emergent) school

The learning school supports a more informal, bottom-up, collective and collaborative (high delegation of authority) approach to strategy making. A key perspective of this school is the emergent perspective (Mintzberg, 1998). As opposed to the rest of Mintzberg et al's (1998) nine schools of strategic management which were synthesised and conceptualised based on their review of the literature, the emergent perspective of strategy was developed by Mintzberg based on his observation on how strategy making actually takes place in organisation and thus, descriptive rather than

prescriptive (Mintzberg, 1972). This is symbolised in his definition of strategy as “a stream in a pattern of significant decisions” (Mintzberg, 1972, p.90) and thus refuting the notion that strategy making takes a formal, long-term, top-down and individual approach as in the design and planning schools (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Its similarity with the entrepreneurial approach is that it advocates simultaneous formation and implementation of strategy.

Mintzberg’s observation that strategy emerges explains why intended strategies are not always realised. This is supported by other study findings that 60% of organisational strategies fail to achieve their intended goals due to inadequate implementation (Pearce et al., 2006; Beer & Nohria, 2000). Key reasons for this low strategy achievement include exogenous shocks (Herhausen et al., 2014), lack of clarity and coherence among strategic decisions (Chemwei et al., 2014; Slack et al., 2013; Brenes et al., 2008), inadequate or non-involvement of junior staff (Mendy, 2016; Herhausen et al., 2014) and non-operationalisation of the strategies (Mendy, 2016; Slack et al., 2013; Dandira, 2011). Of these reasons for strategy failure, exogenous shocks and the non-involvement of lower-level staff align well with Mintzberg's view of why organisational strategy takes an emergent form.

MoBSE status as the oldest Gambian government department, its long history of policy and strategy planning and major transformation and improved performance over the past decades could shed light now how the learning school influenced its decision-making processes.

2.3.1.5 Strategy as practice school

Strategy as practice school was developed by Paula Jarzabkowski out of her frustration with the domination of strategic management research by normative economic theories and quest to address the gaps in other schools of strategic management such as strategy process (focuses on strategy-making at the organisational level and omits the structural context of strategy - interaction between different levels of management), RBV (absence of little explanation of how heterogeneity within firms impacts performance) and dynamic capabilities (fails to explain how strategy-making takes place including how dynamic capabilities are developed and modified over time and their impact on strategy performance) (Jarzabkowski, 2005). A major shift from the schools mentioned earlier is its focus on strategy at the activity rather than the organisational level. It views strategy practices

(administrative, discursive and episodic including meetings, workshops, etc), praxis and actors/practitioners as key to understanding the nature of strategy and considers everyone whose actions and interactions contribute to strategy as a strategist (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Furthermore, it recognises the dynamic nature of strategy, highlights the negative effects of polarity/dichotomy in the other strategic management approaches and emphasises the importance of human activity in the strategy process. Although not relatively new, their view regarding the level of analysis – approaching the above parameters from the internal and external and from the micro, meso and macro levels is significant (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). They also recognise the importance of context - referred to as situatedness, and the appropriateness of various types of strategizing (pre-active, procedural, interactive and integrative) in the study of strategy. It leans towards the constructivist and realist philosophical stance (lived experiences and concrete circumstances of practitioners) approach to conducting research on strategic management.

While generally subscribing to Jarzabkowski's (2005) and Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009) views about strategy, they provided the following additional insights on the strategy as practice literature: strategy as practice schools integrates strategy management as a whole and also addresses weak or taken for granted and widely accepted theories including the relationship between structure, diversification, etc and organisational performance, emphasised the role of the group/stakeholders rather than the individual in the strategy management process and the need for more attention to the messiness/complexity of interpersonal relations and political processes of strategy.

Research gaps identified from the above study include the absence of inter-contextual comparisons, lack/inadequate empirical evidence on the impact of different practices on strategy, within-case study comparison of different actors and practices, the impact of aggregate actors/practitioners and practices on organisational outcome (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This study could help address some of the above problems, especially the role of MoBSE practitioners and stakeholders during key strategy activities such as the Coordination Committee Meeting (sector wide bimonthly and rotational decision-making forum) and School Improvement Plan development (government and grant-aided primary and secondary schools).

2.3.1.6 Network-based and collaborative school

As opposed to relying on competitive strategy to achieve competitive advantage (Porter, 1980), the network-based and collaborative approach to strategic management advocates cooperation and thus, cooperative strategy (Johnson et al., 2020) for improved performance and sustainable competitive advantage. This is due to the interdependence of organisations within and across industries and markets due to globalisation, inadequate capabilities within organisations, and the need for learning and synergy. It thus encourages cooperation and collaboration through such as joint ventures and strategic alliances, co-location of similar service providers as in the case of Silicon Valley in the US and Silicon Fen biotech cluster in Cambridge, UK (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

The need for cooperation and collaboration among public organisations is even more important due to their largely non-for-profit orientation and provision of essential services to the public. Strategy-making through this approach is highly consultative, collaborative, indirect but complex and dominated by lots of negotiation and persuasion to enhance stakeholder buy-in, including forming networks with individual stakeholder organisations and their parent/apex bodies for improved effectiveness and mutual outcomes (Ferlie and Onagro, 2015). For improved effectiveness of this network of partners, there needs to be an information and knowledge management system, robust inter-organisation learning capacity, and dispersed/distributed and influencing leadership styles (Ferlie et al., 2013).

2.3.1.7 Resource-based school

In this school, effective strategy making, and effectiveness is determined by an organisation's resources (tangible, intangible and human) and how these are utilised to create a sustainable competitive edge. Pioneering authors of this school include Penrose (1959) and focuses on the internal environment (capabilities) of an organisation and includes staff knowledge, skills and experiences (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Since then, the school has witnessed numerous and significant developments beginning with Wernafelt's (1984) ideas on the benefits of resources for effective diversification, Barney's (1991) views on the imperfect mobility and perhaps enduring nature of resources by being valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN), Teece and Pisano' (1997) and Teece's (2007) concept of dynamic capabilities – the tendency and the need for an organisation's capabilities to evolve continually for

sustained performance, Cohen and Levindhal's (1990) absorptive capacity – ability of organisations to recognise, exploit and utilise appropriate knowledge and information and Raisch and Birkinshaw's (2008) concept of ambidexterity – ability to simultaneously pursue current goals while effectively adjusting to future situations. Overall, organisational strategy and its overall effectiveness are driven by a highly trained, experienced and innovative staff and resources that are dynamic, flexible, adaptable, highly inimitable and non-substitutable and able to transfer and apply knowledge for organisational improvement effectively. Concerning its relevance to the public sector, Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) believe that it could be applied to some knowledge-intensive public organisations with some level of autonomy at the operational level.

2.3.1.8 Strategy as process school

The strategy as process school grew out of frustration with implementation challenges of rational analytical strategy approaches (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). As opposed to most schools of strategic management which tend to focus on how strategy is formed through localised change within certain settings and how resistance to strategic change is managed, the strategy as process emphasises the importance of time and stakeholder actions and thus, emergence in the formation and implementation of large-scale, organisational-wide or systemic strategic change. It thus supports retrospective longitudinal over cross-sectional research approaches as this enables the detection of false starts and outcomes. Pioneers of this such as Pettigrew (1973; 1979) highlights the importance of understanding and managing organisational politics and culture in ensuring effective strategy making. Furthermore, advocates of this approach acknowledge the need to contextualise strategic change processes holistically.

Key areas of focus in studying strategic process change, referred to as the change triangle by Pettigrew (1978) are the context (the organisational and wider external environmental factors affecting the change initiative), content (policy areas or goals being considered) and process (the systematic or procedure, actions, counteractions and overall interactions among relevant stakeholders) of the strategic change. Overall, this approach recognises and values the importance of contextualism (time, history, space, etc.) in understanding how strategic change takes place and how this in turn, affects the change outcomes (Ferlie and Ongaro).

2.3.1.9 Cultural school

The cultural school emphasises the importance of organisational culture - shared meaning, supports collectivism and cooperation in strategy making and differentiates one organisation, industry and nation from another (Mintzberg et al., 1998). According to the above scholars, culture is acquired through acculturation and socialisation, can be partially explained due to its tacit nature and thus, a basis for sustainable competitive advantage. They further noted that given the deep-rooted nature of culture, it usually leads to the perpetuation of current strategy and behaviours and thus, resistance to change. This therefore implies that for effective strategy making in the current rapidly changing business environment amidst the need for cooperation and collaboration between organisations within and across industries and nations, continuous and effective change is a must for improved strategy making.

Overall, there exists some high level of understanding and ownership of the organisational visions among stakeholders. Given the collective nature of strategy making, the process tends to be dominated by ceremonies, rituals, and symbols and generally informal (Ferlie and Onagro, 2015). The cultural approach to strategy making is considered most applicable during periods of cultural revolution, reinforcement, reframing and institutionalisation (Mintzberg et al., 1998). However, due to large public sector organisations' diverse nature, some differences usually exist regarding the appreciation and interpretation of the organisational culture and vision. A detailed discussion of culture including types and levels is provided earlier in Section 2.1.2

2.3.1.10 Public value school

In contrast to the above schools of strategic management, the public value approach is public-sector oriented (Moore, 1995; Benington and Moore, 2010; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Ongaro and Ferlie, 2020; Ongaro et al., 2021). This, therefore, enhances its applicability to public sector settings. However, due to the distinctiveness of public sector contexts across the globe, the above scholars identify three minimum requirements public organisations must first meet to pursue the public value approach. First, the legislative mandate of the organisation must be weak or flexible to provide it with the needed strategic space. Second, its leaders prioritise public rather than stakeholder value. Third, the organisation values, engages and takes on board the preferences of its stakeholders. To create and continue to expand a public organisation's public value, the following three principles must be met: clearly set

public value driven goals appraised against alternative private investment opportunities, an authorising environment including a powerful coalition of stakeholders across sectors and proving the requisite organisational capacity to mobilise, harness and maximally exploit its resources (Moore, 1995; Benington and Moore, 2010). The above is like what Selznick (1957) Boin et al. (2020) referred to as 'institution' - gained when organisations, including those in the public sector, have: a unique identity and capability, a strong status and high acceptability and lasting viability through adaptation. This can be achieved by shaping the organisation's identity, building, and cultivating a staff that can deliver and maintain a strong relation with the approving environment (Selznick's, 1957). The legislative mandate is weak, ambiguous, or flexible, enabling the organisation to take and implement strategies - defining public value, creating an authorising environment and a powerful and diverse coalition of stakeholders, and building operational capacity that will expand public than shareholder value.

Despite its public sector origin and orientation and higher applicability to public sector organisations, theoretically, the public value approach may witness a low adoption and influence on the decision-making in MoBSE due to its recent emergence and thus relatively low proliferation and the high contextual difference of the Gambian public and education sector from the West, its context of origin.

The following section reviews literature on in the forms of decision making based mainly on the ideas of March (1994) and Bratton (2020) and situations in which they are more effective. These visions of decision-making including rationality, rule-following (categorised into four forms: when an individual has consistent preferences and identities, when two partners individuals/partners have inconsistent preferences or identities, when multiple, diverse and complex actors have inconsistent preferences and identities and in a situation of high ambiguity), could help explain the decision-making approaches of MoBSE.

2.4 Decision-making

Decision-making is perhaps the most important function of organisations/ organisational leaders because an enhanced understanding of decision-making processes enables an appreciation of how and why organisations evolved to their current state (Bratton et al., 2020). Besides, the origin of decisions indicate where power lies in organisations (Bratton et al., 2020.; March, 1994), who is smart and

virtuous (March, 1994). Decision-making is an opportunity for individuals to learn from more experienced colleagues and express personal attributes that could be highly beneficial to organisations; an avenue for communicating the meaning about decisions, the truth, what is happening and why it is happening in an organisation's environment through tools such as stories, rituals, symbols and myths; and is considered a sacred activity in societies driven by the belief that destiny can be intentionally or deliberately managed (*ibid*). Hence, the effective management of information for informed decision making is regarded as a sign organisational competence (*ibid*).

According to Miller et al., (1999), decision-making involves a conscious and deliberate act of attaining a desired future state through the selection of the most appropriate course of action. March (1994) notes that an adequate knowledge of the contextual factors surrounding a specific decision is required to fully understand that decision. There are several to many and often conflicting theories of decision-making. March (*ibid*) identifies and explains two alternative visions of decision making: rationality and rule following. He further distilled the rule-following vision or approach into four forms based on the circumstances under which they occur and are more effective: when an individual has consistent preferences and identities, when two partners individuals/partners have inconsistent preferences or identities, when multiple, diverse and complex actors have inconsistent preferences and identities and in a situation of high ambiguity. Other important but often taken for granted modes of decision are intuition, emotion and judgement Bratton et al. (2020).

Of the above, the rational economic choice model is considered the oldest and most dominant theory of decision making (March, 1994; Bratton et al., 2020). "Rational theories of choice assume decision processes that are consequential [depends on expected future effects/outcomes] and preference-based [options are evaluated based on the extent to which they serve the preferences of the decision-maker]" (March, 1994). In order to select the best option based on prevailing circumstances (information, resources, etc), the following four questions must be answered: what alternatives or actions are possible? What are the likely outcomes or consequences from each of the available options? How valuable are the outcomes from the available options? How should the most valuable option be selected? (*ibid*). A similar but more elaborate rational decision-making model or process is provided by Bazerman and

Moore (2013). Based on underlying assumptions of problem clarity, known options, clear preferences, constant preferences, maximum pay-off and no time/cost constraints, they prescribe that decision-making should take place in the following order: identify problem or opportunity, collect appropriate information, identify options, evaluate options, select best option, implement selected option and evaluate achievement of implemented decision.

Given that the expected future outcomes or consequences of the decisions are affected by uncertainty and risk, decision-makers in such circumstances tend to focus on the sum or product of possible options to select and implement the best (March, 1994). Although most people and indeed organisational leaders are generally risk-averse (*ibid*), risk-seeking decision-makers place higher value and take riskier decisions, especially when they have or are on track to exceed organisational and personal targets. However, scholars noted that decision-making based on rationality has been the exception rather than the norm (Bratton et al., 2020, March, 1994).

Empirical research findings on the nature of decision-making indicate that many factors constrain rationality. This include incomplete information (referred as bounded rationality) information overload including 'satisficing' – failure-induced search and selection of a satisfactory local rather than best alternative/solution, culture (beliefs and social control and validity) exogenous shocks or underestimation of very unlikely events (March, 1994), cognitive or perceptual biases (Hayes, 2014; Edwards, 2001; Conger, 1990), increasing returns – drive to stick with earlier decisions due to efficiency gains such as investment cost recovery, learning and improved coordination (Pierson, 2000; Hayes, 2014), psychological commitment of past decisions including escalation of commitment (Hayes, 2014; Staw, 1981, 1976), groupthink, organisational politics, ethics (Bratton et al, 2020), inadequate resources including time and cost (March, 1994; Bratton et al., 2020). These contribute to poorer decisions. Given that MoBSE is operating a challenging context including scarce resources, it will be important to see how the above factors have influenced its decision-making approach.

The second vision of decision-making, rule-following is based on logic of appropriateness (addresses questions of recognition, identity and rules), familiarity and centrality of identities including morality, ethical behaviour, reconciling and need

for consistency and contextualising among multiple identities and consequences for violating these morals and ethics (March, 1994). It also considers how rules including learning, human behaviour and ultimately, decision making changes over time (*ibid*). Key constraints of this logic of decision making include members being unaware of or unable to following rules due to their complexity, conflicting demands due to situations that evoke several rules and identities, the presence of different rule makers and implementers, partners placing personal and group interest including political over sticking to rules and the need for flexibility, variability and agility (*ibid*). Given that this study focuses on decision-making at the organisational level, this review will focus on the following forms of rule decision-making involving two actors/partners with inconsistent preferences and identities; multiple, diverse and complex actors with inconsistent preferences and identities; and in situations of high ambiguity.

Social choice, political and modern game theories provide a more useful way of understanding decision-making between individuals/partners due to their ability to explain how collective decisions are reached despite inconsistencies and among members (March, 1994). Influenced by differences in preferences, interests, identities, organisational hierarchies (negatively impacts consistency through competition for individual career advancement) and compounded by scarce resources including information (inadequacy, overload, bias, concealment) and time, these inconsistencies including cultural differences, are usually addressed through proclaiming and implementing shared goals through negotiation/politics, accommodation, co-optation, delegation, departmentalisation, selection of suitable partners/members, and agreement (*ibid*). However, to maintain these agreements, the group and organisation must rely on identity-based rule-following and consequence-based rational action, trust, loyalty and mutual actions and benefits (*ibid*). The relatively high diversity of The Gambia and MoBSE stakeholders including the tendency some Gambians allow their ethnicity, religion and political identities to define and dictate how they think and behave towards fellow Gambians and other people (Jallow, 2020) might explain the level of deployment of this approach.

Regarding decision-making involving multiple, complex and diverse actors, key factors of importance include power struggle and coalition/alliance formation; hence, decisions arising from these are often referred to as political or conflictual because of the need for actors to sustain inconsistent preferences and identifies by reaching a

compromise – everyone’s second choice (March, 1994). Typical examples of the above situations are systems of democratic governance, including public bureaucracies. Given that the original decision may not be realised due to uncertainties and distrust among stakeholders, parties try to achieve their interest and fulfilling identity is through gaining knowledge and power. Power differences are promoted by the distribution of power in democratic and bureaucratic systems – includes organisational hierarchies (*ibid*). That despite formal authority conferring power on individuals and organisations, power takes various forms and can only be advantageous when activated – through such as providing more resources in a coalition, providing favours in anticipation of reciprocity in the future and when its holders’ wishes are aligned with those of the organisations (*ibid*). To maximise benefits of decisions due to coalitions, actors generally go for minimal-winning coalitions and emphasise congruence (complementarity, mutual indifference). Shifting claims and demands and participation criteria and benefits (e.g., inclusion/belonging) of actors leads to changes and thus unstable in decisions. Inadequate participation negatively impacts implementation due to inadequate information (*ibid*).

As opposed to viewing decision-making as orderly (based on reality, causality and intentionality as in the case of rationality and pure rule-following), decision-making in the face of ambiguity recognises the importance of lack of clarity or consistency in reality, causality and intentionality and thus leads to blurred alternative states (preferences, identities, multiple meanings, simultaneously opposing/inconsistent interpretations and outcomes of decisions even in the face of adequate information (March, 1994). These are often caused and sustained by subcultures in organisations and teams and loose coupling in organisations (due to delegation and decentralisation) (*ibid*). These contradictory beliefs in the efficacy of action leads to a different interpretation of things and the world based on situations, including the tendency for leaders to ascribe their success to personal effort and failure to bad luck or external factors (*ibid*). Overall, these lead to poor decision outcomes due to symbolic commitment and unpredictability in implementation (*ibid*). Some ways of dealing with ambiguity in decision making include using garbage can decision making processes such as ordering decisions based on time or occurrence and temporal relations (*ibid*). Given that MoBSE’s complex nature is due to the presence of many stakeholders with competing interests amidst its highly decentralised and stakeholder

participatory approach to decision-making, it will be interesting to see if this is a dominant decision-making approach.

Intuition and emotion also play a significant role in decision-making at an individual level. Intuition or gut instinct is the ability to recognise and effectively exploit opportunities or avoid threats using tacit knowledge rather than a deliberate or conscious assessment of alternatives. It is thus, a non-rational decision-making approach (Bratton et al., 2020). However, research findings have indicated that it plays an important role in strategic decision-making, especially in start-ups, SMEs, NGOs, social enterprises, emerging industries, and novel human services settings (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Also discounted by the rational and rule-following approaches to decision making, research has also indicated that emotions, including people's mood can affect decision-making. While neutral moods promote good decision making, both negative and positive moods tend to result in poor decisions due to decision-makers' perceptual biases (Bratton, et al., 2020). Although theoretically less likely to detect decision-making processes based on emotions and intuition in a central-level public organisation like MoBSE with limited autonomy, certain contextual factors such as high empowerment of school communities may enhance these. Similarities between the rational and rule following logics of decision-making are that they are both logics of reason and are concerned with the relationship between personal commitment and social justification (March, 1994).

Given that decision-makers cannot determine the exact outcome of a particular decision, post-decision surprise (pleasant or unpleasant) is a common feature of decision making (March, 1994). This is consistent with Mintzberg's (1998) emergent view of strategic management - planned/intended strategy (selected decision and expectations) are usually unrealised due to uncertainty and other environmental threats. Regarding the impact of high uncertainty or turbulence on organisational performance, O'Toole and Meier (2014) postulate that it is likely to result in low programme success.

Bratton et al.'s (2020) ideas regarding the constraints emotions and organisational politics have on the effectiveness of the rational choice theory echoes Weber's (1964) bureaucratic values of impersonality and neutrality and ideas about charismatic leadership and Peters' (2018) politics of bureaucracy theory. The similarity and

compatibility of the rational choice theory with Weberian bureaucracy stems from the fact that they are premised on and advocate rationality in decision-making. The intuition and judgement perspectives of decision-making are highly relevant to the entrepreneurial and learning school of strategic management, respectively.

2.4.1 Distinguishing decision-making processes and related occurrences (events, episodes and incidents)

The section above identified and discussed key approaches to and processes of decision-making, the circumstances under which they are more appropriate and their likely relevance to Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. Given that this research examines the influence of the above theories on the decision-making processes (and related activities including events, episodes and incidents) of MoBSE, it is important to define and differentiate these. This is provided in Table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3: Definitions and examples of decision-making processes

Decision-making activity	Definition	Examples
Process	While the meaning of ‘process’ varies according to the context in which it is used, it generally refers to “a continuous and regular series of actions meant to accomplish some result” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021c, p.n.d).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human resource management processes including recruitment, reward and dismissal. ▪ School establishment, location and closure processes. ▪ Coordination Committee Meeting school performance evaluation. ▪ School improvement grant budget preparation, disbursement, accounting, auditing and reporting processes.
Event	An occurrence or happening that may comprise of a series of processes or episodes and occasionally, episodes. It is usually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordination Committee Meeting ▪ Senior management team meetings. ▪ MoBSE and cabinet retreats ▪ President’s annual ‘Meet the People’ tour.

	planned with a process (Writing Tips, 2020).	
Episode	A digression within an event (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021d).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Former President's (Yahya Jammeh) initial intention for government to take over grant-aided schools during a cabinet retreat. ▪ MoBSE's rejection of an international donor's offer to provide school infrastructure (classrooms) in the urban rather more needy rural areas during a consultative meeting.
incident	As opposed to episode, an incident is usually an occurrence of less importance that follows a major event (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021e).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school community requests a headteacher to be transferred because of his perceived 'immoral' dress code.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter (2.0) reviewed the literature relevant to this study. It began by looking at the origin, meaning of, key debates on and metaphorical representations of context (2.1.1). Due to its relevance to this study, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 focused on the politico-administrative (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011) and cultural (Painter and Peters, Bouckaert, 2007) dimensions of context and analysed how these could help consolidate or hinder Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management in the Gambian primary and secondary education sector, a non-Western developing country context. Key gaps in the context literature (2.1.4) include grossly limited contextual studies on Africa, including the Gambia and the need more effective contextual theories through analysing causal mechanisms and processes of phenomena. As regards the most effective approach to take in undertaking context-based research,

this study adopts the mid-way, which regards phenomena as being the combined effect of universal principles and cultural/historical factors within which it is placed (Ragin and Zaret, 1983; Hantrais (1999).

Section 2.2 discussed Weberian bureaucracy, the underpinning theoretical framework of this study. This helped clarify the terms bureaucracy, public bureaucracy and Weberian bureaucracy and appreciate arguments for and against bureaucracy, its relevance and importance for effective public management, including in developing, plural and autocratic political settings. The review indicates some strong support for bureaucracy as an affective mechanism for running organisations due to its technical superiority, normative value, and enduring characteristic.

In line with the study objectives – examining the applicability, explanatory power and relationship of strategic management and Weberian bureaucracy on the decision-making processes of the case study organisation, Section 2.3 utilised key literature on strategy especially Mintzberg et al.' (1998) and Ferlie and Ongaro's (2015) schools of strategic management. Due to the high applicability of the strategic planning school, this was used to explain the explanatory power of strategic management on the decision-making processes of the Gambian primary and secondary education sector.

Finally, Section 2.4 looked at the concept of decision-making, its meaning, importance and forms. Given his dominance of the decision-making literature, the researcher relied heavily on the ideas of March (1994) to identify the various forms of decision-making and the circumstances under which they more effective. These was of course, supplemented with the works of other scholars such as Bratton et al. (2020). The main decision-making approaches, referred to as visions by March (1994), that emerged from this review include visions of decision-making: rationality and rule-following. The rule-following vision or approach into four forms based on the circumstances under which they occur and are more effective: when an individual has consistent preferences and identities, when two partners individuals/partners have inconsistent preferences or identities, when multiple, diverse and complex actors have inconsistent preferences and identities and in a situation of high ambiguity (March, 1994). Other important but often taken for granted modes of decision that also emerged from the

review include intuition (March, 1994, Bratton et al., 2020), emotion and judgement (Bratton et al., 2020).

3.0 Research methodology

This section discusses the research methodology (philosophical stances) and methods that this study has utilised, and how they were informed by the phenomenon being investigated, and their envisaged impact on the validity and reliability of the study findings. Subsection 3.1 highlights the importance of an appropriate and robust research design to the effectiveness of a research project. It further discusses and explains the researcher's choice of the subjectivist and critical realist ontological and epistemological stances, respectively; the suitability of the case study and multiple methods and mid-way, over universalist and culturalist approaches to analysing contextual influences. In addition, it justifies the selection of MoBSE as the case study organisation, the use of purposive sampling and face to face interviews (individual and group), observations and archival over other data collection methods, the appropriateness of qualitative thematic analysis, force-field analysis and narrative analysis strategies. Subsection 3.2 explains the researcher's ethical considerations, including how the case study organisation and research participants were accessed and consent and confidentiality issues were addressed. Subsection 3.3 highlights the fieldwork challenges the researcher encountered and lessons learned. Subsections 3.4. provides the summary conclusions.

3.1 Research design, philosophy and rationale

Despite the existence of a wide array of research approaches in the social science and public administration literature, research design – a blueprint to guide the research process from research question to results, is often the most important decision for researchers after the formulation of the research topic and question (Marczyk et al., 2005; Saunders and Bezzina, 2015; Abutabenjeh and Jaradat, 2018) and theoretical framework (Alavi et al., 2018). Therefore, a poor research design is likely to affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire research project (Kothari, 2004). Fortunately, consensus exist among key authors (including Earl R. Babbie and John W. Creswell) regarding the concept and importance of research design (Abutabenjeh and Jaradat, 2018).

Although usually presented linearly in most frameworks, the research process in general and methodology are rather complex and iterative. Regarding research design in the social sciences, the starting point for researchers should be identifying of a relevant perspective from the ontology and epistemology research philosophies to the

phenomena being investigated (Saunders and Lewis, 2012; Bell et al., 2019). Once the appropriate ontological and epistemological perspective is chosen, the next steps in sequential order should be methodological choice, strategy; time horizon, and procedures and techniques (Saunders et al. 2007).

The following sub-sections explain each of the above mentioned and associated stages of social science research methodology.

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the world, its constituents, and the relationship between and among these various constituents (Potter, 2006). It is the belief that social reality exists in time and place and that individual and collective objects/actors and resulting outcomes such as events can be understood from the following categories: what, who, when and where (Virtanen, 2013). For Fleetwood (2013), it goes beyond material stuff to include anything that has a causal effect. Social reality is regarded as either objectivist/positivist or constructionist/subjectivist (Bell et al., 2019) and the ontological contexts or perspectives adopted by researchers affect how they formulate knowledge claims about social reality and phenomena in public organisations (Virtanen, 2013). The objectivist ontological perspective including structuralism – belief that social structures and institutions pre-exist and are a-contextual (universal and immutable) and form the bases for social interventions and enhance individual agency (Ongaro, 2020), regards the world or social reality as external/separate from the actors, including the researcher. In contrast, the subjectivist ontological perspective regards actors as constitutive of social reality (Potter, 2006; Bell et al., 2019).

Given the above, there is a need for compatibility of a researcher's ontological stance to the social phenomena being studied for improved reliability and validity. The choice of the subjectivist perspective for this study is both as a result the nature of the phenomena being examined – the presence, drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy, the influence of Weberian and strategic management on the decision-making processes, their complementarity or incompatibility and how they are framed by the Gambia's and MoBSE's contexts. These can only be understood by putting oneself into the relevant stakeholders' environment and the researcher's previous experience with the above contexts and the phenomena being investigated.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with how the world/social reality (ontology) can be investigated and what counts as valid or standard knowledge (Potter, 2006; Virtanen, 2013; Bell et al., 2019). In relation to public administration, it is concerned more with social ontology – the study of social entities such as social structure, norms, values and practices (Elder-Vass, 2010, Ongaro, 2020), their constituent parts, generative mechanisms - individualism or holism, and belief that knowledge about social entities can be obtained and attained through various means including empirics, speculation and imagination (Ongaro, 2020).

Three main epistemological approaches exist: positivism, realism and interpretivism (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). From the positivism standpoint, valid knowledge can only be gained through scientific methods and quantitative techniques and supports generalisation of research results. Relativism/interpretivism, an antithesis of positivism, advocates for a more flexible way of researching social phenomena and creating knowledge (Bell et al., 2019). Due to its view that social phenomena are complex and can only be understood from the subjects/participants' lived experiences and viewpoints, it advocates for the full immersion of the researcher into the phenomena being studied and thus supports multiple explanations for social phenomena (Bryan and Bell, 2007). Realism, the third and a meta epistemological approach, view reality (the truth) as being independent of the researcher's mind and that social reality/knowledge is context-specific, co-created, subjective and better understood through qualitative data methods (Bhasker, 2010). It is, however, divided into three further camps: empirical, idealist, critical and (Fleetwood, 2013).

Like positivism, empirical realism is rooted in the belief that reality is external to the researcher and that knowledge, and the truth can be obtained from observing and testing hypotheses (Bell et al., 2019) and uses induction and deduction for generating predictions (Fleetwood, 2013). Advocates of ideal realism argue that reality is socially constructed from discourse and thus cannot exist independently (Fleetwood, 2013). Unlike critical realism, ideal realism does not support the independent existence of entities and causality. While critical realism embraces the positivist ontological stance, it advocates the mixed-method approach to understanding and creating knowledge (Fletcher, 2017; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015; Fleetwood, 2013). Rather than relying on

perception, critical realism seeks to unveil the generative mechanisms and explanations for observable phenomena (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017). It thus focuses on underlying causes and meanings rather than just what can be observed

This study adopts the critical realist approach as it provides a compromise between the positivist and relativist philosophical approaches and enables the effective investigation, understanding and explanation of contextual issues in public sector settings. Furthermore, its axiological stance regarding the role of the researcher in enhancing the manifestation of things provides a more realistic view of how social science research is conducted (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). This is even more relevant to the phenomenon being studied - the influence of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management on the decision-making processes of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), which involves a wide range of stakeholders: staff, civil servants and elected public officers, and complex and interacting issues of time, position, power and accountability (Porter, 2006). Besides, the above phenomena cannot be adequately examined and explained using the positivist ontological perspective as it is reductionist – discounts complexity (Porter, 2006) and the pragmatist and interpretivist epistemological stances due to their multiple interpretations of social phenomena. In summary, critical realism is the most suitable approach for an adequate understanding and explanation of the phenomena highlighted above.

3.1.3 Design choices and strategy

Philosophical perspectives and research methods adopted by a researcher influence the research design and strategy - either quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods, that a researcher adopts (Creswell, 2009; 2017). For Saunders and Bezzina (2015), it is the ability of the researcher to articulate and justify his/her design choices rather than engaging in research tribalism and paradigm wars, that promotes understanding and appreciation of the different methodologies.

Given the explanatory orientation of this research – identification the causal mechanisms and provide explanations for changes or outcomes (Abutabenjeh and Jaradat, 2018, Yin, 2013) i.e., the level of influence of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management on the decision-making processes of MoBSE, this study employs a case study design and qualitative multiple methods. The case study method

enables an in-depth examination of specific and complex phenomena in a specific real-life context and its suitability over other methods includes its ability to address contextual and complex issues (Yin, 2013). While the single embedded case study design will enable thick description (Yin, 2013; Geertz, 1973) and help illuminate the similarities and differences among education service providers and basic education levels and to some extent, regions of The Gambia (Painter and Peters, 2010), the richness of qualitative multiple methods will enable the researcher to unpack and unpick the taken for granted - the generative mechanism (drivers and inhibitors) of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management and situate the experiences of the various education service providers, school levels and regions in context. It emphasises the importance of openness and receptivity to avoid being distant from the participant (Robson, 2011), eliminates competing explanations and increase internal validity due to triangulation: data source, methods, theoretical perspective and analyst, and causal inferences (Yin, 2013, Patton, 2002).

Rather than universalist and culturalist approaches to case-based within-organisational comparison, this study employs the midway approach – regards phenomena as being the combined effect of universal principles and cultural/historical factors within which it is placed (Ragin and Zaret, 1983; Hantrais (1999). This is because despite its unique context, including sociocultural setup/practices and economic system, and level of development, The Gambia and its education sector has been influenced significantly by external contextual factors, including colonialism and globalisation.

The following sub-sections provide details about the research methods, including the case study, unit of analysis, study population, sampling strategy, data collection and analysis methods and research ethics.

3.1.3.1 Research case study and unit of analysis

The gaps in the literature determine the case study and level of analysis for this study. These include the absence of empirical evidence on the presence, drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy including its relationship with strategic management in West African public bureaucracies in general and education sector in particular, feasibility and the need for effective comparison within the case study organisation – types of education service providers. The embedded case study method enables a deep understanding and comparison of the investigated

phenomena (Yin, 2009; 2013; Alasuutari et al., 2008). The researcher's motivation for selecting the case study organisation is due mainly to:

- his familiarity with its context - prior working relationship and knowledge of The Gambia and the public service, including the case study organisation.
- The case study organisation's high legitimacy among Gambians and international donors and its ability to achieve an enviable rate of performance over most public institutions in The Gambia over the past three decades despite its challenging operating environment (Barma et al., 2014).
- its membership of the biggest post-colonial African Anglophone (largely non-bureaucratic) administrative tradition – helps illuminate the reasons for the consolidation of a bureaucratic mode of operation.
- its status as the first government department to be established by its former colonial masters, Britain; the largest Gambian civil service organisation based on staff count and geographical coverage and its relative high importance in national development.
- its high experience in policy and strategy management – due to the training of a core team of staff in the 1980s, research and collaboration with external stakeholders, including donors, consultants and researchers.
- relative ease of access and availability of considerable secondary data.

Refer to Section 3.0 for a more detailed context of the case study country and organisation.

3.1.4 Research methods

3.1.4.1 Case study organisation and sampling strategy

The case study organisation is the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education – one of two earlier established ministries of education in The Gambia (the other, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, was established in 2007 following the separation of the education portfolio based on levels of education) and its key stakeholders including education service providers' apex bodies, private schools, civil servants and elected public officials. The study sample was purposive and saturated to ensure that all key issues were discussed and observed (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Fletcher, 2017; Bell et al., 2019). The researcher selected and interviewed research participants based on their perceived level of knowledge and experience of decision-making processes and practices of the Gambian basic and

secondary education sector. Hence, former staff of MoBSE and key stakeholder organisations such as Gambia National Museum were included in the study sample to provide a historical context and thus help illuminate the causes of current decision-making practices and processes. This sampling approach is standard practice and popular in qualitative studies (Punch, 2005).

Given that primary and secondary education in The Gambia is comprised of three levels: lower basic (primary), upper basic (lower secondary) and senior secondary (high) and three types of education service providers: government, grant-aided (mostly Christian missionaries), private (including Madrassah/Islamic schools), the researcher ensured that each of these levels were also represented. This is because all schools in The Gambia are guided and regulated by the Education Act, 2018, Education Policy 2016 – 2030 and associated implementation and performance monitoring tools such as the School Management Manual, 2017. Triangulation of data – individual and focus group interviews, observations and use of documentary evidence helped increase validity and enriched the research findings. A total of twenty-eight interviews and one main observation (CCM) were conducted between October 2019 to mid-February 2020.

Table 3.1: Study participants by type of data collection method, type of organisation and designation

Participant	Data Collection Method	Type of Organisation	Designation
Senior internal stakeholder 1	Interview	Ministry (regional education directorate)	Director
Senior internal stakeholder 2	Interview	Ministry (headquarters)	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Senior internal stakeholder 3	Interview	Ministry (regional education directorate)	Principal Education Officer
Senior internal stakeholder 4	Interview (2) ⁸	Ministry (headquarters)	Principal Assistant Secretary
Middle-level internal stakeholder 1	Interview	Private basic cycle school	Headteacher

⁸ Includes a follow-up interview.

Middle-level internal stakeholder 2	Interview	Grant-aided upper basic school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 3	Interview	Government senior secondary school	Deputy Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 4	Interview (2)	Government senior secondary school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 5	Interview	Government lower basic school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 6	Interview	School cluster	Cluster Monitor (Education Officer)
Middle-level internal stakeholder 7	Interview	Grant-aided lower basic school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 8	Interview	Government lower basic school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 9	Interview	Private senior secondary school	Headteacher
Middle-level internal stakeholder 10	Focus group discussion	Grant-aided basic cycle school	Deputy headteacher (2)
Middle-level internal stakeholder 11	Focus group discussion	Government upper basic school	Deputy headteacher (2)
Lower-level internal stakeholder 12	Interview	Grant-aided lower basic school	Teacher ⁹
Lower-level internal stakeholder 13	Interview	Grant-aided lower basic school	Teacher
Senior external stakeholder 1	Interview	Government department	Director
Senior external stakeholder 2	Interview	Non-governmental organisation	Chief Executive Officer and Former Senior Staff of MoBSE
Senior external stakeholder 3	Interview	Government department	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Senior external stakeholder 4	Interview	Government department	National Assembly Member
Senior external stakeholder 5	Interview	Education service provider apex body	Education Secretary

⁹ Islamic (Madrassah) teacher.

Senior external stakeholder 6	Interview	Education service provider apex body	Secretary General
Senior external stakeholder 7	Interview	Education service provider apex body	Former Education Secretary
Middle-level external stakeholder 8	Interview	Education service provider apex body	Coordinator
100+ people	Observation	Coordination Committee Meeting – the sector’s largest, bimonthly, rotational stakeholder consultative forum	Various education stakeholders and categories

3.1.4.2 Data collection methods

Data for the study was both secondary: existing grey (case study, national and stakeholder reports) and academic literature, and primary: semi-structured interviews (individual and focus group) and observations/field trips. The above qualitative multiple methods approach and triangulation strategy are highly compatible with the ontological and epistemological stances of this research and enable the gathering of data on all aspects of the investigated phenomena, cross-validate data and thus enhance the quality of the study results (Elliot and Timulak, 2005). Each of the methods mentioned above are further explained as follows:

3.1.4.2.1 Secondary (archival) data

Secondary data include raw data or published reports by an organisation and its stakeholders, including international donors and external researchers. A review of the literature (academic and grey) on public management, especially Weberian bureaucracy, strategic management, context (national and case study organisational context (organisational and national contexts including political, administrative, cultural, legal and economic) - the starting point for the research, has not only helped provide the background and context but has influenced the overall study approach including key issues for interviews and observations. For example, through a review of relevant literature including the study theoretical frameworks: the principles of Weberian bureaucracy (formal and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation, graded authority and hierarchy, merit-based system, office

management through the written file, rule and procedure-based operations and permanent/protected employment) (Weber, 1964) and schools of strategic management that are applicable to public settings: (design, strategic planning, entrepreneurial, learning cultural, resource-based, strategy as process, network-based and collaborative, strategy as practice and public value) (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) emerged as the key topics for discussion. These topics were then explored through observations and individual and group interviews to further identify first order, second order and third order themes.

Given the large scope, cost and time constraints (Bell et al., 2019) of the research project – inclusion and comparison of three types of education providers (government, grant-aided and private) and three levels of basic and secondary education: lower basic including nursery, upper basic and senior secondary, secondary data was relied on heavily for a proper understanding of the case study organisation context and has even led to unforeseen discoveries (Saunders et al., 2009). However, the researcher was mindful of the appropriateness, quality (methods used and results), authority and predispositions/biases of the original authors of secondary data sources (Czinkota and Ronkainen, 2013; Hayes, 2014).

3.1.4.2.2 Primary (empirical) data **Data Collection Instruments**

A predesigned data collection guide, informed by the study's theoretical frameworks: principles of Weberian bureaucracy, schools of strategic management and research objectives and questions was utilised. The data collection guide included relevant issues such as bases for decision-making, key decision-making forums, human resource management processes, strategic management and leadership approaches, societal and organisational cultural norms and practices, and colonial laws, systems and structures impacting decision-making in MoBSE. It is important to note that the data collection guide and related instruments such as participant information sheet and interview, focused group and observation consent forms, were developed as part of the OU's Human Research Ethics approval process. The above process and the researcher's supervisors' comments helped improve these instruments including making them more accessible to my participants. For example, the wording *'Advocates of context specificity and pluralism have called for contextualisation rather than generalisation in the management of public organisations. Hence, acritical*

importation or transplanting of western originated/oriented public and strategic management models to public sector settings in Africa is likely to have little impact” under ‘What is the aim of this research’ in the participant information sheet, was rephrased to “*Public sector organisations across the world operate in different contexts/settings. Thus, there is a need for adaptation of foreign and private sector-oriented models to public sector settings for increased effectiveness*” to make it more user-friendly and comprehensible to participants especially those who do not have a management background. Also, data collection guide issues were framed as questions such as “*What are the bases of decision-making in your organisation?*” rather than as key topics (e.g. decision-making, culture, strategic management). Given the need to engage key external stakeholders of MoBSE such as politicians and civil society organisations operating in the education sector, the data collection guide for internal MoBSE stakeholders (staff) was adapted for external stakeholders. Thus, while it was aimed at eliciting information on the same issues including bases for decision-making, this was rephrased to such as “*Based on your knowledge and experience, what are the bases for decision making in the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education?*”

Accessing and selecting participants

Various strategies were deployed in gaining access to research participants. First and foremost, the researcher had to seek approval from MoBSE, the case study organisation, as part of the OU Human Research Ethics application process. A research collaboration letter was written to MoBSE in mid-April 2019 and approval was secured in early-May 2019. Since then, the researcher maintained regular contact with and updated the case study focal person regarding his travel and fieldwork plans. This was beneficial as it enabled the researcher to gain current information including the schedule of CCM events and other important developments regarding MoBSE. Although the above-mentioned approval was already granted by MoBSE before the CCM of the 30 September – 5 October 2019, the researcher still ensured that additional approval was granted for him to observe this event. This is despite the fact that the CCM is a public forum. Moreover, the above forum provided the researcher with the golden opportunity to identify (based on the relevance of their organisation’s mandate, appropriateness of their interventions and approaches to decision-making during the CCM), meet informally and arrange meetings and interviews with potential

participants. One such participant he identified and interviewed during the actual data collection was the headteacher of a school in one of the poorest regions in The Gambia who was able to significantly improve the school's decision-making and performance despite its challenging operating environment. This is because MoBSE authorities repeatedly cited the school's innovative and performance enhancing decision-making approach as case for emulation by other schools in the host CCM region (Region Three) and similar contexts. Given the need to understand the colonial and historical context of the Gambian education sector, a historian and current and former senior MoBSE staff who worked in the sector since or shortly after independence (1965) were included in the study sample. A similar approach was used to identify suitable participants for issues such as HR management in the Gambian civil service and MoBSE, international donor participation and school management. The researcher made deliberate efforts to stratify the study by including relevant stakeholders from across organisational categories, regions and school providers and levels for comparison.

The researcher contacted potential participants through written communication (email and letters) and visits to their workplaces or those they frequented (in the case of teachers and cluster monitors/education officers, these were regional education directorates) to solicit their consent and participation in the research. In every instance, the researcher ensured that the purpose, likely impact of the study, withdrawal and additional information provision mechanisms and period was fully explained. Where he was unable to share the research documents - MoBSE approval letter, data collection guide, project information sheet and interview consent form or focused group consent form or observation consent form (see chapter 7) in advance, he made sure that these were explained to and signed by the participants before any discussions or observations were held. To ensure full confidentiality, the identities of actual participants were concealed from the senior management and focal person of MoBSE. Additional measures to increase confidentiality and participant response rate and reduce disruption to participants during work hours include availing them the opportunity to have or reschedule interviews at a date, time and safe location of their choice.

Piloting

The data collection guide was piloted using both observations and individual face-to-face interviews. Piloting a study is beneficial to researchers across disciplines as it avails them the opportunity to experience the realities on the ground, make necessary adjustments, including the future direction of and thus increase the effectiveness of the research (Byrne, 2001). While it was the researcher's initial plan to conduct interviews before observations, the immediate opportunity to attend Coordination Committee Meeting – a bi-monthly, rotational (based on region) and largest stakeholder consultative forum of the primary and secondary education sector of The Gambia held in Farafenni, Regional Education Directorate Three from the 30th of September to the 5th of October 2019 when he arrived in The Gambia in late September 2019 for fieldwork, proved very useful. Saunders et al. (2009) and Bell et al. (2019) identify four participant observation researcher roles: complete participant, complete observer, observer as participant and participant as observer. While the first two roles involve concealing the researcher's identity, the second two entail revealing his identity to the research participants. Due to the need to conform to the Open University and wider disciplinary ethical guidelines and associated benefits (experiential learning by the researcher and increased trust and openness from participants), the researcher adopted the participant as observer role during the CCM. To help minimise key issues such as observer affect and compromised researcher objectivity (Saunders et al., 2009), the researcher made trust-building with participants a priority.

Witnessing the decision-making processes of the CCM including policy and projects implementation updates from various departments and stakeholder organisations, school visits (performance assessment) to one of the randomly sampled schools and presentation of school visit reports by various teams were used to gain first-hand information and experience on MoBSE's decision-making processes and practices. Data from observations including the CCM was in the form of field notes (Bell et al., 2019) and included the researcher's description, reaction and interpretation of the issues/phenomena observed (Elliot and Timulak, 2005) and were guided by the data collection guide. Further to documenting the CCM process to determine if it was bureaucratic or collaborative, some of the issues captured in the researcher's

fieldnotes include among others things, “a call from stakeholders for the revival of MoBSE’s HR Taskforce to reconcile HR and payroll issues, MoBSE employment a flexible approach in dealing with underperforming and problematic teachers due to such as inadequate teaching staff and suitable accommodation/staff quarters in remote areas, introduction of a separate forum for stakeholders of the CCM host region in 2016 to promote place-based education value co-creation and evidence of a collegial and co-dominant politician (minister) – bureaucrat (permanent secretary) relationship”. These field and other rapid participant fieldnotes were analysed further to determine the presence, influence and relationship of Weberian bureaucracy and schools of strategic management on decision-making in MoBSE. Besides informing interview questions, observations also help cross-validate data from interviews and literature reviews. The main advantage of this method over interviews and archival review is that it reduces/eliminates participants’ subjective bias, effects of past or future intentions and is less demanding regarding the cooperation and suitability of participants who may be unwilling or unable to express themselves adequately during an interview (Kothari, 2004).

In addition to observing the CCM over a period of five days, five individual face-to-face interviews were conducted as part of the pilot study in October 2019. These five interviews were with two senior-level internal stakeholder (Director and above), one middle-level stakeholder (headteacher) and two senior-level external stakeholders (Director of a key government department and Head of a key civil society organisation operating in the education sector). Although these five participants were from MoBSE Headquarters and Education Directorates One and Two, the biggest and most diverse regional education directorates, the above pilot sample enabled the researcher to validate views from these various categories of stakeholders and from the pilot observations. As opposed to the pilot observations in which the researcher could only examine research issues unfolding during the CCM, all relevant aspects of the data collection guide were explored during the pilot interviews.

In line with Byrne’s (2001) views regarding the benefits of piloting for researchers including the opportunity to experience and learn from realities in the case study organisation for improved effectiveness of the research, the pilot study helped the researcher to identify keys contextual issues influencing the consolidation of Weberian

bureaucracy and strategic management in MoBSE. An analysis of the pilot observation data from the CCM policy implementation updates sessions revealed features of the presence of strategic planning school. Various teams were required to assess the performance of the sampled schools against MoBSE's minimum performance standards for essential areas (leadership and management; teachers' professional development; community participation; teaching and learning resources; curriculum management; and learner welfare and the school environment) for effective teaching and learning. Data from the school visits also indicated some features of Weberian bureaucracy. Weberian bureaucracy due to the need for schools to maintain proper and updated records (official communication through the written file) and work in accordance with the Basic and Secondary Education Act, 2018 (official jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation), Education Policy 2016 - 2030, School Management Manual, 2017 and related instruments (procedure and rule-based operations) (MoBSE, 2017).

Given the pilot study interview participants' experience and knowledge of decision-making and history of the Gambian civil service and education sector, themes that emerged (such as the role of colonialism, international donors, and societal culture on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic planning) from analysing the pilot interview data provided useful insights and served as a starting point for further exploration during actual interviews. For instance, while castes emerged as a possible inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy's values of equality during the pilot phase, the researcher missed the opportunity to enquire further about the causal mechanisms of this cultural practice. However, a review of and feedback on the pilot interview data from the researcher's supervisors and the need for alignment with the research's critical realist philosophical stance, the researcher made key changes to his questioning technique by following up on data gaps and probing deeper for generative mechanisms of these issues during the actual interviews.

The above has helped immensely in improving the quality of the interview data and study findings as this new approach enabled the discovery of the root causes of such as castes and joking relations among ethnic groups and communities in The Gambia. Also, the researcher's manual transcription of the pilot interview data revealed how

using simple and short rather than long and compound questions could improve the quality of data.

Actual data collection

Interviews (personal and focus group)

Interviews formed a major part of the actual study. A total of twenty-three actual interviews were conducted over a period of three months - from November 2019 to January 2020. These comprised of nineteen semi-structured personal face-to-face interviews, two focus group discussions and two remote follow-up interviews. The interviews lasted between twenty to ninety minutes and were guided by an interview guide and audio recorded with the prior consent of participants.

All except one of the twenty-eight interviews were held in English. This was because, the concerned participant and a Madrassah teacher, did not speak English fluently as she received her training in Arabic. Given that she was a native speaker of Mandinka, Gambia's largest ethnic group and one of the two most widely spoken languages (the other being Wolof), which the researcher speaks fluently, the interview was conducted in Mandinka. Given the above, the researcher made extra effort in ensuring that she fully understood the purpose of the study and issues of confidentiality before signing the consent form.

The researcher tried as much as possible to create a buffer space of one hour between interviews to enable him note key issues and gaps from interview recordings for effective follow up. Such notes include the need to clarify among others, the causal mechanisms and impacts of joking relations and castes on education service delivery and complains from several respondents regarding the non-promotion of some of their colleagues (teachers) who were due for promotion. For example, a follow-up interview with a senior staff of MoBSE revealed that the delay in promoting some headteachers in the provinces was due to the fact there was an ongoing exercise to classify/reclassify the concerned schools. Often, the researcher's ability to review each interview recording was limited as there were many occasions when he had to seize opportunities for interview. Beginning with interviews that provided the most interesting and useful insights, the researcher transcribed these manually. Although tedious and took an additional two months (up to April 2020) after returning from

fieldwork in mid-February 2020, manually transcribing interview recordings enabled familiarisation with and improved data analysis.

While used mainly to discuss all relevant issues with participants, the actual interviews served an additional purpose for following up on issues and gaps identified from the pilot study. For example, while the researcher missed the opportunity to dig deeper into the generative mechanisms of joking relations among ethnic groups, communities, especially among Jolas and Serers and their positive impact on decision-making, from an earlier actual interview, a review of the academic literature on joking relations in The Gambia and a subsequent interview with a senior external stakeholder indicated that this was due to the belief that these two ethnic groups share a common ancestry. This approach was employed for all relevant participants on key issues until a saturation point was reached. Saturation was established when the researcher noticed no additional insights on the discussion and emerging issues from the interviews. For example, all regional education stakeholders, education service provider apex bodies and teachers interviewed repeated and highlighted how the school improvement plan management process promoted participatory decision-making (strategic planning) through engaging key stakeholders including parents, and accountability (Weberian bureaucracy) through prior approval from regional education directorates (school improvement plan); Planning, Policy Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate (school improvement plan budget); Gambia Public Procurement Authority (procurement plan) and implementation reviews through providing audited accounts to regional education directorates. Regarding Weberian bureaucracy's principle of permanent employment, issues around high job security in the teaching field, made possible by MoBSE's relative high adherence to the Education Sector Policy 2015 – 2030; General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013); School Management Manual, 2017); and low political interference kept resurfacing during the interviews.

The advantages of semi-structured personal interviews include the collection of rich data on the phenomena as it allows participants to share their private views, while minimising/avoiding likely negative repercussions such as victimisation for expressing dissenting and unpopular views through other methods such as focused group discussions (Hayes, 2014) and reduces the participation restriction and data analytical problems associated with structured and unstructured interviews (Kothari, 2004; Bell

et al., 2019). In addition, it offers the researcher the opportunity to clarify issues during the interviews and follow up on emerging issues that would not have been possible in the case of self-administered interviews (Hayes, 2014).

Given the advantages of focus group discussions in enabling the researcher to elicit and establish general viewpoints at an early stage of the research, address the issue of interviewing distantly located participants (Alasuutari et al., 2008) and easily gauge consensus/disagreements on key issues among participants (Saunders et al., 2009), two focus group discussions were conducted with participants (teachers) in the same or similar organizational categories. Since the researcher could only carry out follow-up and additional interviews and access participants remotely – due to the lingering Covid-19 pandemic, two follow-up personal interviews were conducted remotely (via WhatsApp voice call) to either clarify or explore missed and emerging issues since his return from fieldwork. This is consistent with the research question's open-ended (and exploratory/explanatory nature (Elliot and Timulak, 2005).

To complement data from the actual interviews and pilot observations, additional observations during the actual study were mainly through rapid participant observations during visits to MoBSE and its stakeholders' offices. These observation data were captured in the form of fieldnotes and include information accessibility, adherence to formal communication channels, procedure and rule-based operations and equity principles.

3.1.4.3 Data analysis methods

While qualitative data analysis is usually flexible, it should be systematic and organised so that the researcher can easily trace back information and results to the dataset and its context (Elliot and Timulak, 2005). The study data include secondary data on the case study organisation; interview and focus group audio recordings; correspondence with case study organisation and participants; and participant observation/field notes. Audio recordings were transcribed manually, and interview transcripts anonymised in line the ethical principle of confidentiality.

For improved quality of research results, the researcher employed two complementary qualitative data analysis strategies: qualitative thematic and narrative. He utilised qualitative thematic strategy (Turner, 2010; Clarke and Braun, 2017) to identify the key and sub-themes: decision-making processes, events or episodes for discussion.

Besides, it is the most widely used data analysis approach across social science disciplines, highly flexible and applicable across epistemological and ontological positions (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Swain, 2018). An abductive approach to analysing and interpreting study data was utilised. Abduction advocates simultaneous engagement with theoretical (deduction) and empirical (induction) data and thus, it is both a hypothesis and data-driven (Thompson, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2012.p58-59) notes that *“in reality, coding and analysis often uses a combination of both approaches. It is impossible to be purely inductive, as we always bring something to the data when we analyze it, and we rarely completely ignore the semantic content of the data when we code for a particular theoretical construct—at the very least, we have to know whether it is worth coding the data for that construct”*.

Since familiarity with theoretical literature and relevant framework(s) is key and helps avoid drifting away from the research objective(s) and question(s), the researcher set out with predefined direction in mind. Nevertheless, the researcher looked for data that did not support existing theory (principles of Weberian bureaucracy and schools of strategic management) for possible additional contribution to the public management literature in general and bureaucracy and strategic management theory more specifically. An iterative process of data analysis and theorisation was adopted. This was achieved using Braun's and Clarke's (2012) six-stage method to conducting thematic analysis: familiarisation yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report.

1. Familiarising yourself with the data

As a starting point, the researcher listened to all the interview audio recordings at least once before transcription. Using the Pareto principle (20-80 rule) – 80% of outcomes results from 20% of all causes or inputs (Investopedia, 2022), he first transcribed the eight most insightful (two and six from the pilot and actual interviews respectively) recordings. The remaining twenty audio recordings were also transcribed manually and anonymised by the researcher. This was followed by reading each transcript actively, analytically and critically (Braun and Clarke, 2012) including taking notes to makes sense of their accounts and identify which portions or things in the data were

relevant to the research questions. The researcher illustrates this with some preliminary analysis of an excerpt from External Senior Stakeholder 1's interview:

“In the early days of colonial rule, it was really a meritocracy because the positions were few and the number of qualified people were more than the positions. So really, you had to sit to a civil service entrance exam.”

The researcher initial analysis of the above comments indicated that further to colonialism, the lean size of the civil service, caused by the concentration of colonial administrative structures and schools in the colony (Banjul and Janjanbureh – formerly Barthurst and Georgetown respectively) and a curriculum tailored to the needs (clerical skills and services) of the colonial administration, helped consolidate the merit-based approach to human resource management in the Gambian civil service.

The anonymised interview transcripts and observation (fieldnotes) were then imported into NVivo 12 Plus. The choice of NVivo is because it is highly suitable for qualitative and unstructured data and offers convenient search and display benefits (Thompson, 2022). While it made data organisation and retrieval easier, the active and reflective thematic analysis process was researcher-led.

2. Generating initial codes

Codes provide a summary or label for relevant sections of the study data. Two main approaches to coding: descriptive (semantic) - involves staying close to the content of the data, and latent - an interpretation about the data content (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Consistent with this study's critical realist stance and research questions including identifying and explaining the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian and bureaucracy and strategic management and their relationship, the researcher adopted the latent coding approach. Following the first round of reading the transcripts (familiarisation) and using NVivo, the researcher read each transcript several times to generate initial or first order codes. This was done for every data item that was considered relevant to the research questions. A repeat of this process enabled the grouping of similar data extracts into pre-existing codes and generation of new codes for emerging or unrelated data extracts. Table 3.2 illustrates the data structure of two initial (first-order) codes: 'influence of colonialism on merit-based employment and factors negatively impacting access to education' generated through the above

process. Further review of the coded data and initial codes resulted in the modification, merging or discarding of some of the codes.

Table 3.2: Initial data structure of first order codes

Exemplar narratives	Initial codes
<p><i>“In the early days of colonial rule, it was really a meritocracy because the positions were few and the number of qualified people were more than the positions. So really, you had to sit to a civil service entrance exam.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 1)</p>	<p>Influence of colonialism on merit-based employment</p>
<p><i>“For the civil service, for them to give you a post, you have to sit to a government exam. You have to sit to an exam before you get promoted.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 7)</p>	
<p><i>“Our seniors used to tell us there was an entrance examination. We also understand that Ghana still does and respect the entrance examination.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 3)</p>	
<p><i>“I think one of them is sexism which has delayed the women folk from getting education although it has improved right now. Because that was a big cultural barrier (...) taking girls to school was a taboo.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 1)</p>	<p>Cultural factors negatively impacting access to education</p>
<p><i>“There was a particular community I was posted. In that community, the school was founded in the 80s. But it was very rare to see a girl child graduate from grade 6 in that community. It was until our time in 1996 to 1998 that we had such. We kept sensitising them that if you are not educated, you will become a housewife. You put that motivation in them so that they can change.”</i> (Middle-level internal stakeholder 10)</p>	
<p><i>“There is a certain part of the community that are actually not interested their boys going to school. They prefer sending them to the local madrassah, the ‘Dara’. When I talk to them, they tend to say, actually, the boys should be coming back to handle family things”</i> (Middle-level internal stakeholder 5)</p>	

Because during that time [colonial era], people upcountry did not send their girl child to school. They thought the girl child was meant for the husband and kitchen. (Senior external stakeholder 7)	
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It is important to note some elements of initial models such as charismatic leadership, bureau-shaping and the politics of bureaucracy were omitted from the thesis despite some interviews capturing these elements. This was because the researcher had to reframe his research due to Covid-19 related disruptions and the need to focus on a few theoretical frameworks to enable an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon being examined.

3 and 4: Searching for and reviewing themes

In thematic analysis, themes are much more complex and comprise two to multiple codes to provide a theoretical description of a phenomena (Thompson, 2022; Braun and Clarke, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2012) clarified and warned that rather than regard themes as emerging from the data, researchers play an active role in generating themes relevant to the research questions and thus, limits the possible number of themes. As part of the process of generating themes for this research, the researcher reviewed the initial codes to identify similarities and disparities. He then grouped them into themes based on their relatedness. For example, '*cultural factors negatively impacting access to education*' in Table 3.2 above was clustered with related such codes as '*castes*' to form a theme called '*discriminatory cultural norms and practices*'. This was enhanced by collating all relevant data extracts and codes and reviewing them thoroughly to ensure consistency across the themes. Those that were too diverse or wide ranging were split into sub themes. This includes dividing an initial and second order theme '*culture*' into '*performance enhancing cultural norms and practices*' and '*discriminatory cultural norms and practices*' (see Table 3.5). Tables 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 provide an illustration of how the aggregate themes for this study were generated. It is important to highlight that while one to a few exemplar narratives are provided for the first order codes, more supporting narratives for each the codes are captured in corresponding sections in chapter 4.

Table 3.3: Anatomy of an aggregate theme: Presence of Weberian bureaucracy)

Exemplar narratives	First order codes	Second order themes	Aggregate theme
<i>“An Act to provide for the management and development of education services in The Gambia, the registration of teachers and control of schools and to make provisions for matters connected therewith.” (Basic and Secondary Education Act, 2018.p2)</i>	Legal mandate	Official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation	Presence of Weberian bureaucracy
<i>“At the level of MoBSE, we have three tiers of decision-making. We have the Education Act. We have the education policy, which is teased out from the Education Act and the various directorates also have their policies.” (Senior Internal Stakeholder 1)</i>	Organisational role and goal clarity		
<i>“Every office and officer have his or her terms of reference” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)</i>	Team and staff roles, operating processes and relations	Graded authority and hierarchy	
<i>“If there is an issue at hand at the regional level, it is the director and probably, if he needs the support of the principal education officer (PEO) and the senior education officers (SEOs). If it is related to a school, the first point we will take reference from is the cluster monitor who supervises the cluster. He is our technical adviser for any issue in the cluster. We don’t jump the gun”. (Senior internal stakeholder 3)</i>	Jurisdictional competence		
<i>“Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Quality Education for Sustainable Development [theme of Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030 consultations]” (MoBSE, 2016).</i>	Equitable access to education and services		
<i>“The other thing is that instead of our officers applying for promotion, we go through the list of the staff that we have. We’ve stopped advertising vacancies for senior-level staff such as senior education officers, directors and permanent secretary. We promote based on seniority and performance. The same applies to the teaching cadre.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)</i>	Competence-based HR management system		
<i>“...notwithstanding [seniority], that does not automatically qualify you for certain promotions because it is not only seniority that qualifies you for promotion. You also need to develop yourself over time (...) you have people, although coming later, they develop</i>			

<i>themselves, and they've got the required qualifications to be taken from the classroom to admin or HR.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)</i>			
<i>“...official channel of communication with any Ministry is through its Permanent Secretary, to whom all official correspondence shall be address. The official channel of communication between a subordinate officer and Government is through his Head of Department, and all correspondence must be channelled through him.” (Public Service Commission, 2013, p.46)</i>	Formal communication system	Office management through the written file	
<i>“They [partners] may have to seek clearance from the ministry and the ministry will give us [regional education directorates and schools] permission to collaborate with them. They may not come to the region directly.” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)</i>			
<i>“...most of the decisions we take are all guided; they are all referenced. So, that is why in the civil service, we have the Public Service Regulations, General Orders, Code of Conduct and of course on the financial side, we have the financial manual supplied by the Accountant General’s Office. On our part as HR practitioners, we make use of course, mainly the Act [Public Service Act, 1991].” (Senior external stakeholder 3)</i>	Rule-based decision-making	Rule and procedure-based operations	
<i>“...the Ministry is well-grounded with systems. Whoever comes, the first reference point are the Act and the policies. They work within that. Everybody is au-fait with the policies to the extent that if a Permanent Secretary mistakenly goes out of context, someone will always call him to order.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i>	Awareness and adherence to organisational policies and tools		
<i>“If you look at the former regime, (...) with all the sackings of ministers, no minister has ever been sacked. The same goes for the permanent secretaries.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i>	Tenured and secured job career path	Permanent/protected employment	
<i>“I think in the education sector (...) very, very minimal. I think the few that were affected were isolated cases.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)</i>			
<i>“I don’t think they [teachers] will complain about job security because it not easy to dismiss somebody from the civil service. You have to go through a lot of channels.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)</i>			

Table 3.4: Anatomy of an aggregate theme: Drivers of Weberian bureaucracy

Exemplar narratives	First order codes	Second order themes	Aggregate theme
<i>"In the early days of colonial rule, it was really a meritocracy because the positions were few and the number of qualified people were more than the positions. So really, you had to sit to a civil service entrance exam." (Senior external stakeholder 1)</i>	Colonial-era civil service entrance and promotions examinations	Post-colonial legacy	Drivers of Weberian bureaucracy
<i>"...for the civil service give you a position of responsibility, you have to sit a government exam. You have to sit an exam before you get promoted. You can be there for ten years without promotion if you don't pass that test." (Senior external stakeholder 7)</i>			
<i>"To maintain high standards of efficiency and proficiency in the service there shall be admission examinations for entry to the civil service." (Public Service Commission, 2013. p.8)</i>	Revival of civil service entrance examinations		
<i>"Colonial rule by nature was centralised. The civil service too has overwhelmingly remained the same. For example, the first thing the British did was to establish what they called the secretariat, now called the Quadrangle. So, what has happened is that has morphed and got bigger and bigger. During the colonial period, it was called the colonial service. At independence it became the civil service. But the hierarchical nature is still the same." (Senior external stakeholder 1)</i>	Maintenance of a highly centralised colonial administrative system.		
<i>"The civil service under colonial rule continued to be to be the same type of civil service under so-called independent structures." (Senior external stakeholder 4)</i>			
<i>"I would say the whole fabric of our education system is colonial. There have been some changes here and there but even up to now the use of English as a medium of communication. Even the assessment methodology and grading system." (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i>	Lingering colonial era education system		
<i>"The most significant contributor to the education sector is donor fund. It provides the biggest support to the sector constituting 80% of capital expenditure." (MoBSE, 2016)</i>	Donor-driven bureaucratic management processes	Politics of conditionality by international donors	
<i>Because, when they talk about these standards, they would tell you if World Bank</i>	Accountability and reporting		

<p><i>heard this. I am not sure how much the World Bank is giving to the Ministry. So, meeting the minimum standards is looked up with a view to what would be the impression given to these international bodies.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)</i></p>	<p>requirements of donors.</p>		
<p><i>“Definitely, our reference point is the Act and Policy. What we always try to avoid is setting a precedent. Unlike other ministries whose staff populations are between 60 to 100, we are dealing with over 16,000 employees. If you set a precedent, you’ve opened the floodgates.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i></p>	<p>Decentralised and diverse stakeholders</p>	<p>Organisational complexity</p>	
<p><i>“Relatedness with Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and overlapping roles with other ministries such as Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender and Children affairs.” (Researcher observation).</i></p>	<p>Role clarity and synergy</p>		
<p><i>“Every politician wants a loyal civil and public service because without that, you cannot work. So, if you ask me one reason why bureaucracy has to remain the way it is? I think because of politics. Sometimes it is the political order which helps to entrench the bureaucracy” (Senior external stakeholder 1).</i></p>	<p>Job security</p>	<p>Convenience structure of politicians and civil servants</p>	
<p><i>“Civil servants are like animals. They know that any day you remove bureaucracy, they’ll go home. So, bureaucracy has to remain. So, I think it is a survival mode for the civil service.” (Senior external stakeholder 1)</i></p>			
<p><i>The document [Education Policy 2016 – 2030] outlines the aims and objectives of education in this country which are synchronised with the education-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).” (MoBSE, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Global human development and education standards</p>	<p>Global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices</p>	
<p><i>“When the President goes on tour, Education was the only sector where the minister will go with a dataset. Anything that he wants to know about that community, the school, the minister will be in position to provide it. In fact, he used to make that remark.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i></p>	<p>Improved decision-making and stakeholder management</p>	<p>Increasing Managerial autonomy</p>	
<p><i>“Our relationship with donors is such that the donor element is downplayed to a level that it doesn’t influence decisions that much because we do our research together and we share our findings with them. So, all our drive has been informed by facts rather than intuition or</i></p>			

<i>something else.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i>			
<i>“During the President’s ‘Meet the People’s Tour’, communities would want to use politics to request for a school. The Minister would intervene by providing the statistics and the President will have nothing to say” (Senior stakeholder 4)</i>	Reduced political and stakeholder interference		

Table 3.5: Anatomy of an aggregate theme: inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy

Exemplar narratives	First order codes	Second order themes	Aggregate theme
<i>“Where that caste system was coming into play was to do with the children of the so-called masters sitting in the same class with the children of what they call their servants. It happened in Konteh Kunda Suukoto and Niggi.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i>	Castes	Discriminatory cultural norms and practices	Inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy
<i>“Some communities are conservative to the extent that the recruitment drive for girls was a problem. Some communities would not send their female children to school.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)</i>	Sexism		
<i>“There is a certain part of the community that is not interested in their boys going to school. They prefer sending them to the local Madrassah, ‘Dara’. But for their girls, they prefer them to go to school. When I talk to them, they tend to say, actually, the boys should be coming back to handle family things”. (Middle-level internal stakeholder 4).</i>			
<i>I have seen also where the proprietor has the guts to say, among these Arabic teachers, Mr [name withheld] is going to be the head despite the fact that he is the most junior teacher in that setup. Because I have seen where teacher trainees are heading Madrassah when there are qualified teachers.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)</i>	Particularism (favouritism)		
<i>“I was staying in a compound where they will tell you not to wash and dry your clothes in the evening. It brings them bad luck. I also taught in a community where they will tell you when to cook. If you exceed that time, they will come for you.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 10)</i>	Superstitious and freedom curtailing cultural beliefs (taboos)		
<i>I can cite one example like Kanilai. The headmaster there is a Serer. So, he took that</i>	Joking relationships	Performance-enhancing	

<p><i>relationship card between Serers and Jolas. So, he is well accepted in that society. Because all the time, he will tell them that I am your king and they will say no, you are our slave or things like that. So, that man is really accepted, and I think that has really raised the level of cooperation from the parents and that school did very well this academic year.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 5)</p>		<p>cultural norms and practices</p>	
<p><i>“Another example I can give is Kartong. We have had different headmasters, but they were a bit careful because my people are difficult. So, we had to send one of us. So, he had to tell them I am from here, I am not going to look at your mother or father’s face. I am like your mother and father in this school. So, they are a bit not sure. So, they are serious with their studies. They have also increased the hours of studies.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 5)</p>	<p>Social ethics</p>		
<p><i>“The children, the natives of the place (...) some of them came and said ‘we want to go back’. There was even one with a degree. He said ‘I want to go back and help in my village. I said you can go back but I can only give you HTC salary’. He said ‘I don’t mind’. And so, the natives going back to the place has really influenced the performance. Maybe it is not common, but that example is good because the people have gradually attained 96% pass in the basic education exams.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 5)</p>	<p>Social capital</p>		
<p><i>“When I was in [name withheld], they wanted to make me their adviser. I told them I could only be their adviser on the condition that Shariah would take precedence whenever there is a conflict between religion and culture.”</i> (Lower-level internal stakeholder 1)</p>	<p>Religious-oriented decision-making</p>	<p>Religion</p>	
<p><i>“Also, we need more capacity building for Madrassah because we lack capacity in many aspects.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 6)</p>	<p>Human resource management challenges</p>	<p>Inadequate national and organisational-administrative capacity</p>	
<p><i>“For example, the appointment of cooks. Some of those are given to you to bring in people you trust. Cooks, orderlies, people who will look after the household. You can’t just give that one to anybody, isn’t it? Some of those things we need to understand. Sometimes, it is better to recruit them from the region. If you appoint a person from</i></p>			

<i>Banjul and post them to Basse, you know he cannot survive given the low salary.” (External senior stakeholder 3)</i>			
<i>“The challenges are the government does not have enough resources. We [AMANAH, Madrassah apex body] still have some of our teachers that we send to Gambia College and cannot appoint them because of the limited resources. For the past two years, we have been suffering from that financial problem because the change of government has caused a lot in terms of the subventions that we used to receive from the Ministry. So, these are some of the problems.” (Senior external stakeholder 6)</i>	Inadequate financial autonomy		
<i>“...electricity is also a challenge in most schools. Although now, some of the schools that MRC Holland are building have been solarised, there are still a lot of schools that don’t have electricity. Those are the challenges we face, especially at the regional level. Not all mobile companies have network in those areas.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)</i>	Low national economic development		
<i>“Of course, here, you know you have different ethnic groups and each of them have their own norms. So, you have to understand them in order to be with them. You have to accept some of their culture. Like, some children that come to school with a type of haircut, they have just come fresh from circumcision. You have to accept them like that for the period. Because they will tell you, this is our culture.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 7)</i>	Street-level bureaucracy	Tolerating and accommodating school communities’ cultures	
<i>“...there is the peculiar division of the country into the two separate parts: colony and protectorate. The colony was under the direct control of a governor. Before any significant political change occurs in their respective areas in the protectorate, the Colonial Administrator will consult the chiefs either through the Conference of Chiefs or through the Travelling Commissioners”. (Barry, 2022)</i>	British indirect rule system	Post-colonial legacy	
<i>“Relative high heterogeneity of the Gambian society and varying preferences of education stakeholders” (Researcher observation)</i>	Competing stakeholder demands	Stakeholder diversity	
<i>“Imposition of democracy and related systems of governance in The Gambia and Africa.” (Researcher observation)</i>	Administrative culture	Ideological differences in	

		public governance	
<i>“The speaker of the National Assembly and Deputy Speaker shall be elected by the members of the Assembly from among the nominated members [total of five and nominated by the President]”. (Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, 1997)</i>	Dominance of the National Assembly, judiciary and civil service by the executive (presidency)	High concentration of power in the Gambian presidency	

Table 3.6: Anatomy of an aggregate theme: The Influence of Weberian Bureaucracy on Decision-making in MoBSE

Exemplar narratives	First order codes	Second order themes	Aggregate themes
<i>“The other thing is that he [former President, Yahya Jammeh] would go with a notion that something is possible and would want to go far as making it policy or a ruling. And the sector that the issue concerns will not have the courage of going to him and presenting him with a detailed piece of analysis and evidence that would advise him against that.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i>	Managerial autonomy	Challenging/Dealing with unlawful, policy contravening and ill-informed executive directives and pronouncements	The influence of Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making
<i>“The first time he [former President, Yahya Jammeh] wanted to introduce scholarship for all the girls, he wanted to make an announcement. My minister said to him, can you wait for us to know what exactly is involved. The minister called us, and we had the data. We just made a simple table showing the number of girls in each region, how we are spending on their books, school fees, etc. It was faxed to her, and she took it to him. That was during the days of Ann Therese Ndong Jatta. When she gave it to him, he said ‘no! no! no! We cannot afford this. Let’s shelf it for now’. If she had told him at that time for him to realise that it was not possible, was that not going to create a problem for her?” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i>			
<i>“I will give several examples of where we challenged him and he had to back out and because of that, he ended up having very high regard for us and our minister.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i>	Politician-bureaucrat relations		

<p><i>“I have been in the sector through different times. What I mean by that is a period where donors would come and say this is where we are going to put our money into, this is where we are going to provide external consultants, to a different situation where they will come, and we will present to them what we feel our priorities are and negotiate with them on the basis of that. I can tell you, at the beginning, to be fair to the donors, the sector was led by people who could not even tell you that this is the type of education system we want and justify it.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 2)</p>	<p>Education and donor management capacity</p>	<p>Managing MoBSE – donor relations and shifting the power balance</p>	
<p><i>“I remember even telling a Japanese donor at the time we wanted to build classrooms in the rural areas – Region 3,4,5 and 6 and of course the Fonis which is part of Region 2. This guy came and said to us the money they have available can only be used in the urban area. We said to him we don’t need that because our conscience would not allow us to be putting up classrooms in the urban areas when the need is in the rural areas. He left and went away.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 2)</p>			
<p><i>“I remember when we started as cadet administrative officers, 50% of our staff were all MoBSE related in terms of their appointments, issue of promotion letters, longevity. It was so cumbersome and difficult.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 3)</p>	<p>HR and Performance management</p>	<p>Ensuring a speedy, fair, transparent and trusted human resource management process</p>	
<p><i>“We had to set up our database that would contain all the relevant information about teachers, their years of recruitment, when they were confirmed, how many times did they receive promotion. So that’s what we were using. Teachers’ Union was invited to be part of the committee [Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers]. The directors in the regions and headquarters were part of this.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 2)</p>			
<p><i>“...they developed so much confidence in the system, and because of that we were not receiving any petitions.”</i> (Senior external stakeholder 2)</p>	<p>Organisational justice</p>		
<p><i>“...we try as much as possible not to interfere with those cultural issues. We always come up with a solution that would</i></p>	<p>Diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>Exploiting and navigating national culture to increase</p>	

<p><i>respect those cultural values.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)</i></p>		<p>stakeholder cooperation and organisational performance</p>	
<p><i>“...here, you know you have different ethnic groups and each of them have their own norms. So, you have to understand them in order to be with them. You have to accept some of their culture. Like, some children that come to school with a type of haircut, they have just come fresh from circumcision. You have to accept them like that for the period. Because they will tell you, this is our culture.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 7)</i></p>			
<p><i>“If I can cite one example like Kanilai. The headmaster there is a Serer. So, he took that relationship card between Serers and Jolas. So, he is well accepted in that society. Because all the time, he will tell them that I am your king and they will say no, you are our slave or things like that. So, that man is really accepted, and I think that has really raised the level of cooperation from the parents and that school did very well in this academic year.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)</i></p>	<p>Decision-enhancing cultural practices</p>		

Table 3.7: Anatomy of an aggregate theme: Strategic planning decision-making

Exemplar narratives	First order codes	Second order themes	Aggregate theme
<p><i>“This directorate [Planning, Policy Analysis, Research and Budgeting] will have four integrated components: planning, budgeting, information and statistical analysis. Its primary function will continue to incorporate advice on analysis of policy issues; collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of education statistics; analysis and evaluation of recurrent and development expenditures from both government and external sources. EMIS [Education Management Information System] will continue to be accorded a priority status in the quest for an effective tool in the rational planning of the education system.” (MoBSE, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Strategic planning structures</p>	<p>Formal and collaborative strategy formation planning</p>	<p>Strategic planning decision - making</p>
<p><i>The Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030 is the first sector-wide policy written after the separation of the portfolio of Higher Education from Basic and Secondary.” (MoBSE, 2016, p.ii)</i></p>	<p>Formal and long-term sector policy and strategic plan</p>		

<p><i>Premised on The Gambia's Vision 2020, Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the policy document was prepared using a highly participatory approach with the theme: Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Quality Education for Sustainable Development."</i> (MoBSE, 2016, p.ii)</p>	<p>Consultative and participatory strategy making</p>		
<p><i>"We have regional and national conferences. In our national conference, schools are represented. They select their representative and send them to regional conferences. They come there with their issues."</i> (Senior external stakeholder 2)</p>			
<p><i>"After the yearly work plans, they work according to their action plans. And if there is a month designated for a particular activity, all the teachers will come together and assist."</i> (Lower-level internal stakeholder 2)</p>	<p>Operationalising education sector and school policies and plans</p>	<p>Strategy Implementation</p>	
<p><i>"...you have your action plan, and this is prepared every term, you have the duty roster where each teacher has a role to play and so forth."</i> (Middle-level internal stakeholder 11)</p>			
<p><i>"At the end of each term, a bank reconciliation statement must be prepared for the term, filed and presented to the SMC. In addition, a record of expenditure for the term must be prepared and submitted to the regional office, from where it will be forwarded to the GPPA. This should be received by the regional office by the end of the term, so that it can be received by the GPPA by the 15th of the following month"</i> (MoBSE, 2017)</p>	<p>Monitoring and review of sector and school programmes</p>	<p>Strategy evaluation</p>	
<p><i>"The CCM as an Assessment Forum is a major policy endeavour that will enable the participating stakeholders (i) to construct a comprehensive picture of the progress at school level towards the achievement of the Education for All goals which was set since 1990 at the Jomtien Conference, (ii) to identify priorities and promising strategies for overcoming obstacles and accelerating progress, and (iii) to revise the national plans of action accordingly."</i> (MoBSE, 2015)</p>			

5. Defining and naming themes

Having identified, reviewed and ensured consistency between various themes, the researcher delved into a deeper analysis of the study data. This involved identifying the unique contribution of each theme and selecting appropriate data excerpts to support its explanation. Where possible, two to several data extracts were used to support analysis of the various themes abductively - how they address the research question(s) and relate with or deviate from themes such principles of Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management. The following illustrates how a key second order theme “*Ensuring a fair, transparent and trusted staff promotions process*” (4.3.4) under the aggregate theme ‘The influence of Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in MoBSE’ (4.3) was analysed to gauge its relevance to Weberian bureaucracy principle of merit-based employment and graded hierarchy and authority, and values of equal and fair treatment and how they shape decision-making in MoBSE:

Box 3.1: Ensuring a fair, transparent and trusted human resource management process (Excerpt)

As regards the promotions process, it was stained with many problems, including complaints from staff due to perceived discrimination. This was mainly due to delays and a lack of a clear overall process:

“I remember going in as Permanent Secretary (PS) and receiving hundreds of petitions about a promotion that was done just before I went in. Teachers contesting why A was promoted and not me? Why A was promoted and not C? From that point, we are not responsible but the data that was to be used by Public Service Commission (PSC) would be coming from us.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

To improve procedural and distributive justice during promotions, all eligible staff – those without “adverse reports” (Senior external stakeholder 2) are considered. These are then screened based on merit (qualification, seniority and performance) by the promotions committee, and the final shortlist is forwarded to the Public Service Commission for approval. Those that are unsuccessful are allowed to appeal/contest the Committee’s decision:

“We used to leave a few spaces in case in processing the date, some would be erroneously left out.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

The ability to lower-level staff to contest their superiors’ (Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers) decisions without being victimised augurs well with Weber’s (1964) principle of graded hierarchy and authority, which provides junior staff with the opportunity to seek redress if treated unfairly. The above interventions above have increased the level of trust in the Ministry’s promotions process among staff and other key stakeholders, especially the Public Service Commission and Personnel Management Office:

“...they developed so much confidence in the system, and because of that we were not receiving any petitions.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

[See Section 4.3.4 for full analysis].

Equally, cases of deviation from themes identified from the literature: principles of Weberian bureaucracy (official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation, graded authority and hierarchy, meritocracy, official communication through the written file rule and procedure-based operations and permanent/protected employment (Weber, 1964)) and applicable schools of strategic management in the public sector (entrepreneurial, learning, strategic planning, cultural, corporate governance, public value, network-based and collaborative, public governance, neo-Weberian state (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015)) were isolated and analysed appropriately for an enhanced contribution to the public management literature. Box 3.2 illustrates how decision-making enhancing features of ‘*joking relationships*’, an informal practice and a sub-theme of ‘*performance enhancing cultural norms and practices*’ (see 4.2.3.2), challenges the Weberian bureaucracy theory and widely held notion that the relatively low level of effectiveness of many African states and public organisations is because of their high informality:

Box 3.2: Decision-making enhancing properties of joking relations (Excerpt)

Despite implementing a merit-based HR system, there were a few occasions where education personnel, especially headteachers, were posted to certain communities based on a joking relationship between their tribe or community and the host community. Exploitation of the joking relationship card by education authorities and staff has contributed to increased cooperation and performance in some schools.

“...if I can cite one example like Kanilai. The headmaster there is a Serer. So, he took that relationship card between Serers and Jolas. So, he is well accepted in that society. Because all the time, he will tell them that I am your king and they will say no, you are our slave or things like that. So, that man is really accepted, and I think that has really raised the level of cooperation from the parents and that school did very well this academic year.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

The high effectiveness of the Serer-Jola (fourth and fifth largest ethnic groups in The Gambia, respectively) joking ties is caused by the belief that the two ethnic groups share a common ancestry. Hence, hurting and the unwillingness of parties to grant favours to each is frowned upon or highly disapproved. While the academic literature features many theories and studies on joking relations, these are based mainly on peacebuilding and conflict management (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, Gundelach, 2000; Smith, 2004; Davidheiser, 2005; Garde, 2008; Rigby, 2012; Sogoba, 2018; Lamle, 2019), work relations in a large Swedish company (Nelson, 2014) and six district councils in Northern Ireland (Brown and Worthington, 2010), public relations and business strategy in the Gambian society (Badjie and Nugrahanti, 2021), resistance and contestation of power through booing of Spanish leaders and national anthem during football games by Catalonians (Vaczi, 2018), masculinity and homosocial conformance among teenage male students in three lower secondary schools in Sweden (Odenbring and Johnasson, 2020), identity construction and power contestation among Japanese female inn workers (Yoshida, 2001) rather on stakeholder management in a public organisation or school setting. Furthermore, they contradict the widely held belief that the high level of underdevelopment and ineffectiveness of most African public organisations are ineffective due to their high informality level (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

6. Producing the report

As noted by Braun and Clarke (2012), this stage (6 and final stage) overlaps with stage 5 (defining and naming themes) of thematic analysis. This is because data analysis and reporting occur simultaneously in qualitative research. According to the above authors, this stage of thematic analysis involves producing a coherent and convincing story or narrative about the data analysed. Taking cue from this, the researcher presented the five sections of the findings and discussion chapter (Chapter 4) in a logical order. Given that it forms the main objective of this research and the need to assess whether strategic management provides alternative or complementary explanations to Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in MoBSE, findings on Weberian bureaucracy were presented first. Furthermore, the order of the three sections on Weberian bureaucracy ensured a logical connection between them. First, there was need to detect, empirically, Weberian bureaucracy's principles (4.2: The Presence of Weberian Bureaucracy in MoBSE). Second, given the moderate presence of Weberian bureaucracy, there was need to identify and explain the key factors enhancing and hindering its consolidation (4.3: Drivers and Inhibitors of Weberian Bureaucracy in MoBSE). Third, the results from 4.2 and 4.3 were then used to explain how Weberian bureaucracy influences decision-making in MoBSE (4.4: The Influence of Weberian Bureaucracy on Decision-Making in MoBSE). Mainly, findings in 4.4 reveal that rather than Weber's pure (ideal) type, MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy that enhanced its decision-making. This was caused by among other things, the moderating effects of contextual factors such as societal culture, politics and other non-bureaucratic management logics such as strategic management.

Given that MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy (Doty et al. 1993) and increased applicability and potential of strategic management for public management, the strategic planning school was used to illustrate the explanatory power of strategic management theories and its relationship with Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in MoBSE. Hence, the presence and explanatory power of the strategic planning approach to strategic management on MoBSE's decision-making processes was first examined (4.5). Due to the significant influence of the above strategic management approach and Weberian bureaucracy (4.4) on decision-making in MoBSE, section 4.6 was used to further examine their relationship

(co-existence and complementarity). Findings from this section indicate that rather than being theoretically incompatible, Weberian and bureaucracy and the strategic planning school of strategic management were complementary. Therefore, their relationship should be conceptualised in a nuanced rather than an antithetical or polarised perspective. In each of these sections, the researcher tried to ensure coherence and the relationship among sub-themes. For instance, while all inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy (see 4.2.3), the researcher showed how religion and joking relations helped mitigate the negative impacts of castes on education service delivery.

To complement thematic analysis carried out above, the narrative strategy, a process-type data analysis approach, was also utilised due to its appropriateness for contextual research, single or several embedded case studies, ability to provide a detailed and accurate account of the decision-making processes and significantly reduce the problems of poor interpretation and detection of causal mechanisms associated with employing other process-type data analysis strategies such as visual mapping, synthesis and grounded theory (Langley, 1999). As opposed to the variance approach, which focuses on correlation, the process approach is concerned with how things evolve over time and how outcomes from organisational processes and activities are sustained (Gehman et al., 2018). Besides, process thinking enables one to derive insights about factual past and current events through interviewing and observation, prefers abduction to induction and deduction and recognises the relative effectiveness of various process theory analysis strategies (Gehman et al., 2018). The above approach to theory building is highly compatible with my research. It will enable better understanding of how Weberian bureaucracy has evolved and influenced decision-making in the Gambian public service in general and its primary and secondary education sector in particular.

In line with the critical realist approach, data interpretation went through the following stages: abduction – re-describing the data based on existing theoretical concepts and retroduction - examining the causal mechanisms and identifying demi-regularities (Fletcher, 2017). The researcher was also mindful of competing explanations and his experiences to enable an effective challenge to existing knowledge/theories (Fletcher, 2017).

3.2 Ethical considerations

This study prioritises the research project's sensitivity and related ethical considerations. The researcher has obtained formal approval from the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC/3257/Mendy). The HREC application included participant's information sheet, interview, focus group and observations forms, data collection guide and approval letter from the case study organisation. The participant's information sheet and consent forms provided detailed explanations and assurances on key ethical issues, including participant recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality and data security issues - storage and processing and dissemination of research findings (see Section 7.0: Annexes for details). Furthermore, the researcher has made a commitment to adhere to the ethics guidelines of the relevant disciplinary body – British Sociological Association (BSA) and has taken an extra effort to adapt these issues to the local context of the case study organisations being investigated.

3.3 Fieldwork challenges and reflexivity

As is typical of all research, the researcher encountered some major challenges during fieldwork. However, he exploited other opportunities by utilising context-specific strategies to increase participant response rate and study data quality.

Key challenges include his inability of conduct a cross-country and organisational comparison due to delays and eventual lack of access to his second (Ministry of National Education, Senegal) and third (Ministry of Education, Guinea-Bissau) case study organisations. Although visited and met focal persons in early February 2020, it was until late March 2020 that the researcher received formal provisional approval from Ministry of National Education, Senegal. Despite this, he was unable to get final approval and thus access due impacts of Covid-19 pandemic. This was because key staff, including his focal person were busy setting up/strengthening online education delivery platforms and mitigating other impacts of the pandemic. The Ministry of Education, Guinea-Bissau was excluded from the study due to the protracted political crisis following the disputed November 2019 presidential elections. Overall, this deprived the researcher of undertaking a cross-country comparison of the presence and influence of Weberian bureaucracy based on colonial history. Nevertheless, the research has been reframed – embedded case study to enable within organisational comparison based on type of education service provider (government, grant-aided and private schools and to some extent, regions). While the researcher did not envisage

exogenous shocks and major disruptions such as the Covid-19 pandemic to his research and thus, prioritised and commenced data collection on his primary case organisation (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, The Gambia), visiting his second case study organisation (Ministry of National Education, Senegal), in the early in October 2019, could have enhanced his chances of securing access before the peak of the pandemic and lockdown in March 2020. Other challenges encountered include his inability to interview some key staff of MoBSE despite sending several emails and making visits and calls. This is because the researcher had met the above individuals during MoBSE's September – October 2019 CCM in Farafenni. However, due to their preoccupation with the forum's activities and the need for the researcher to observe the entire CCM process fully, he had to engage them informally including planning for interviews after the above forum. A key lesson from this experience includes the need for researchers to grab/exploit the first available opportunity to talk to potential participants where possible.

Based on his knowledge about The Gambia and ten years' management consulting experience in the Gambian public sector, including MoBSE, and personal networks, the researcher could access more participants through informal channels including making unarranged visits to their workplaces or those they frequented. For example, after a low participant response rate from October to the first half of November 2019, despite contacting and chasing potential participants through formal communications channels, including email, the researcher was able to conduct eleven interviews with teachers, school coordinators, cluster monitors and regional staff in three days by visiting schools and regional education directorates. It is important to note that this high response rate was partially enhanced by the high level of exposure and awareness about the importance of research on organisational effectiveness among MoBSE's stakeholders. Hence, all the participants willingly and eagerly participated once the researcher introduced himself, his research project and provided relevant documents, including a letter of approval from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.

3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter outlines and justifies the researcher's choice of research methodology and methods. The study's philosophical stances were informed largely by its theoretical lenses (Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management) and

phenomena being studied (influence of Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management on the decision-making processes of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of The Gambia). Given the need to identify and explain the contextual factors enhancing and inhibiting the adoption and consolidation of the above management approaches in a non-Western and developing country context and their generative mechanisms, the study adopted critical realist and interpretivist philosophical stances. As a result, compatible qualitative research approaches such as the case study method and interview, observation and archival data collection strategies were utilised. A purposive and snowballing sampling strategy was used to ensure that only participants with the requisite knowledge and experience about the phenomena being studied were selected and interviewed. Hence, former staff of MoBSE and key stakeholder organisations were included in the study sample to provide a historical context and thus help illuminate the causes of current decision-making practices and processes. Two relevant and complementary qualitative data analysis strategies: qualitative thematic and narrative, were utilised to improve the quality of the research results. The chapter further explains the study's ethical considerations and discusses fieldwork challenges and lessons learned.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction: overview of the case study country and organisational context

This introductory section to Chapter 4 relies on secondary data and the researcher's experience to provide an overview of the role of the Gambian and MoBSE contexts in shaping the consolidation of the Weberian model of bureaucracy and strategic planning approach to strategic management on decision-making in MoBSE. This includes its colonial and political history, socioeconomic, sociocultural, legal, and educational contexts. It highlights how key colonial and political events and structures, such as the high concentration of political power in the Gambian presidency and leadership approach and preferences of the former regime shaped and influenced the adoption and consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. It also explains how the demographic, cultural, economic, and legal set up and realities of the Gambian society and differences with the West, especially its former colonial master, Britain, may affect the applicability of the above approaches. The section concludes by providing a detailed evolution and organisation of the Gambian education section and system and some performance statistics.

4.1.1 Colonial context

Until 1445, when first European (Portuguese) explorers led by Alvise Cadamosto arrived, The Gambia was part of the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires of present-day West Africa and ruled by local kings (Perfect, 2016). While they first reached The Gambia in 1587, it was until 1765 that the British formerly took control of The Gambia (after numerous conflicts with the French and Dutch for its control (*ibid*). Having been governed initially from Sierra Leone, The Gambia would become a separate colony in 1888. Other important administrative developments include the declaration of the whole of The Gambia except Banjul (formerly called St Mary's Island or Bathurst) a protectorate in 1902; its division into chiefdoms and indirect administration through local chiefs; attainment of internal self-rule and election of Dawda Jawara as the first Prime Minister in 1963 and organisation of the last Conference of Protectorate Chiefs (part of the British indirect rule administrative structures) in 1964 (*ibid*). The above events, especially the deployment of the indirect rule system and low proliferation of schools in the protectorate amidst resistance to Western education from the locals could provide explanations for the current system and state of education in The Gambia (see 4.1.5 Educational Context).

The lingering effects of colonialism in Africa continue to be a hot debate in academic and political discourse. There is a strong belief in many quarters in former colonies and developing countries that colonialism and neo-colonialism is the root cause of their current state of underdevelopment. The reasons for colonialism and annexation - modern colonialism, vary. However, it was mainly for power, prosperity, security, and status (Hayes and Roth, 2010). While the official language of African states and other former European colonies including The Gambia is perhaps its most pronounced effect, colonialism has equally influenced their public administrative systems. However, the technocratic/managerial rather than analytical and explanatory approach to researching public sector reforms in Africa has resulted in an inadequate understanding and appreciation of the role of colonialism in shaping the current states of affairs in the management of African public organisations (Hyden, 2010).

In contrast to the view that change or reform should take a comprehensive/holistic approach (Stacey, 1995), a targeted piecemeal approach seems to be more effective in African political and organisational settings where civil servants have little or no control over (Hyden, 2010). To help improve public service performance in Africa, successful organisations – public organisations that manage to thrive in challenging contexts should be used as benchmarks to spread good practices and reforms to their public sector counterparts (Darland, 1981). However, the emphasis on quick wins by international development partners including the World Bank, lack of continuity and/or resistance from organisational and national leaders is a key militating factor to effective public management reform and effectiveness in Africa (Hyden, 2010). Findings from this study will shed light on the role of colonialism on the consolidation and hindrance of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE.

4.1.2 Political context

Formerly a British colony, The Gambia gained independence and republican status in 1965 and 1970, respectively. Upon gaining independence from Britain in 1965, the government of The Gambia was headed by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and its leader Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, was re-elected five consecutive times until he was toppled in a bloodless military coup on 22 July 1994. Before this, a failed but bloody coup d'état, led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang took place in 1981. Key reasons for the above event included dissatisfaction and disgruntlement of the public with high levels of poverty corruption and nepotism in the public sector (International Center on

Nonviolent Conflict, 2010). Having helped quell the coup and the need for more security by the PPP government, a confederation was formed with Senegal in 1982. However, this disintegrated some ten years later due Gambians' dissatisfaction with the dominance of the relationship by Senegal (International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2010).

Bowing to international and domestic pressure to return to civilian rule, the military government, Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) led by Captain Yahya Jammeh in 1994, instituted a National Consultative Committee (NCC) to draft a new constitution. The Committee recommended returning to democratic elections in two years (1996) and adopting the 1997 Constitution after a referendum. Jammeh's party, Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), won a landslide victory in the 1996 presidential and 1997 parliamentary elections. Although the Late Sir Dawda Jawara of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) currently holds the record of longest-serving president of The Gambia (30 years), Jammeh's twenty-two long rule ended in January 2017 after he was defeated in the December 2016 presidential elections by Adama Barrow, who was backed by a coalition of seven parties and one independent candidate.

The Gambia is a multi-party democracy with a presidential system of government. Like its former colonial master, Britain, it implements a triad form of government consisting of the executive, legislature and judiciary. However, unlike to the British bicameral systems of parliamentary democracy, The Gambian implements a unicameral parliamentary system. The high concentration of power the Gambian presidency makes the Gambian bureaucracy especially central-level civil service organisations such as MoBSE prone to political interference. This is explained in detail in 4.2.3.8 (Ideological differences in public governance and 4.2.3.9 (High concentration of power in the Gambian presidency).

4.1.2 Sociocultural context

Located in West Africa, surrounded by Senegal except for the Atlantic Ocean and divided into almost two equal sides by River Gambia, The Gambia is the smallest country on Mainland Africa, with a population of about two million people and land size of about 11, 000 square kilometres (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). Despite its relatively small size, it is highly diverse in ethnicity, religion and culture. The main religions, Islam and Christianity, constitute about 96% and 4% respectively (*ibid*).

There are mainly nine ethnic groups with the largest, Mandinka, constituting about 34.4% of the population. Fula, Wolof, Jola, Sarahule, Serer, Manjago, Bambara and Aku account for 21.1%, 14.8%, 10.5%, 8.2%, 3.1%, 1.9%, 1.3% and 0.5%, respectively (*ibid*).

While its high diversity is further increased by the presence of many denominations of Christianity and Islam, this is more pronounced among its ethnic groups. For instance, despite being just 2% of the Gambian population, the researcher's ethnic group is comprised of about 35 clans, most which are present in The Gambia. Of the 110,705 of non-Gambians (4%) of non-nationals, Senegalese, Guineans, Bissau-Guineans form the largest with 44.3%, 27.8%, 5.5% respectively (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). It is important to note that the proportion of non-Africans is quite significant as it accounts for 5.5% (*ibid*). Of its eight Local Government Areas (LGAs), Banjul, Kanifing and Brikama have the highest population densities due to their higher level of development and rural-urban migration – most public and private sector organisations, including schools are located here.

The highly diverse nature of the Gambian society respect for differences among Gambians has a significant impact on the applicability of Weberian bureaucracy in its public sector. This is because some Gambians allow their ethnicity, religion and political identities to define and dictate how they think and behave towards fellow Gambians and other people (Jallow, 2020). This is a key reason for conflict in the Gambian society (Jallow, 2020). This is despite deliberate attempts at the national and education sector levels to address the problem. Measures taken include constitutional, regulatory and policy provisions against discrimination against persons based on their identity and personality (Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, 1997; Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, 2020; Public Service Commission, 2013; Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education; 2016) and diversity awareness and peacebuilding programmes at the national, sector and community levels. As this phenomenon tends to promote tribalism and nepotism, it may affect the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucratic principles, especially equality and meritocracy. Also, lingering traditional beliefs and practices against girls' education among some tribes and parts of The Gambia could militate against its consolidation.

Besides its high diverse demography, the uneven level of development and large proportion of the primary and secondary school-going age range of 5 – 19 years, which constitute 38.5% of the population (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013b) has huge implications for education service delivery. Further to the need to cater to the educational needs of this huge chunk of the population, inadequate basic national infrastructure including information and communication technology, transportation network and health facilities in most and affected parts of the country could negatively impact on the sector. For instance, of the 47.7% and 40.8% of daily ICT users in the urban and rural areas, only 25.9% and 23.1% do so in an educational centre respectively (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013c). The above challenges may affect adherence to some Weberian bureaucracy's principles such as office management through the written-file and meritocracy.

4.1.3 Socio-economic context

According to the 2020 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index, The Gambia ranks 172 out of 189 countries making it one of the least developed countries globally (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). However, it still performed better than some of its West African (Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger) and other African (Ethiopia, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mozambique, Burundi, Chad, South Sudan and Central African Republic) counterparts (UNDP, 2020). As of 2015 20.8% of the population were extremely poor, respectively (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2019; 2015). This coupled with the generally large household sizes – an average of 10 persons, the unemployment rate of 36.2% - persons aged 15 – 64 years (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2018), high economic dependency ratio of 202 per 100 persons employed (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013d) and cultural pressures for employed and wealthy persons to support family members may affect public officers' ability to fully adhere to Weberian bureaucracy's values of integrity and neutrality. This is because the relatively low pay of Gambian civil servants may not be sufficient to shoulder such responsibility, and this could tempt them to use some unlawful and unbureaucratic means to fulfil this obligation. This may equally be the case in the education sector as it is the third-largest national employer (7.4% of employed persons

aged 15 – 64 years), just behind agriculture¹⁰ and wholesale, retail and repair services (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2018)

The Gambian economy is dominated by the services and agriculture sectors, contributing 62% and 23% to Gross Domestic Product, respectively in 2013 (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013e). The Gambia depends heavily on subsistence agriculture and donor funding for poverty reduction and education service delivery. As regards capital expenditure in the basic and secondary education sector, donor funding provides the biggest support to the sector, constituting 80% of capital expenditure (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016). This is important because government funding to the education sector has been less than the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) benchmark of 4.2% (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016). This high dependence on external donors predisposes the basic and secondary education sector to bureaucratic and managerial logics, including Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. For example, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and Economic Recovery Programmes (ERPs) in the 1980s dictated by the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) contributed to a more bureaucratic Gambian public service. In the same vein, the DFID funded Basic Education Support Project for Poverty Reduction (BESPOR), aimed at implementing a sector-wide stakeholder participatory approach, has played a major role in consolidating collaborative modes of strategic management.

4.1.4 Legal context

While largely based on the English common law, as is the case with most British former colonies, Gambia's legal system is tripartite as it also implements customary law – administered by district tribunals and applicable to indigenous Gambians and Shariah law – administered by the Cadi Court system and applicable to Muslims (Amie Bensouda & Co, 2021). Given their historical ties and the similarity of the Gambian and British political and legal systems, one would expect Gambia's public administrative system to mirror that of Britain. Given that Britain operates an Anglo-American rather than the highly bureaucratic Germanic and Napoleonic administrative traditions (Painter and Peters, 2010), insights from this study might highlight why a Weberian bureaucratic logic is more predominant and applicable to the Gambian

¹⁰ Includes fishing and forestry

public service and MoBSE, which equally operates within a highly informal institutional environment.

Relevant national and international legal and policy instruments that significantly influence education management and could impact the adoption and entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy include among others, the Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, 1997; The Local Government Act, 2002; Children's Act, 2005; Women's Act, 2010; Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030; Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Regulations, 2013; Global Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (Gambia has been a partner since 2003); Sustainable Development Goals and United Nations (UN) Conventions on the Right of the Child, 1989. Except for issues regarding decentralisation including eventual taking over of schools at the local government levels (Local Government Act, 2002) and prohibition of all forms of discrimination and harm against women (Women's Act, 2010; Women's Amendment Act, 2015), all the above legal and policy instruments provide for the right to free basic or at least primary education for Gambian children. Moreover, all Gambians are equal before the law and are protected from all forms of discrimination (Constitution of the Gambia, 1997; Public Service Commission, 2013) with special focus on the rights of Women (Women's Act, 2010; Women's Amendment Act, 2015) and children (Children's Act, 2015; United Nations, 1989). While obvious that the above legal and policy instruments provide formal evidence for and augur well with Weberian bureaucracy, especially regarding its meritocracy principle and equality and equity values, a detailed examination of the study data will determine if these provisions have enabled the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy.

4.1.5 Educational context

4.1.5.1 Historical background and policy evolution

The Western school system was introduced in The Gambia during the colonial era by Methodist, Catholic and Anglican Christian missionaries. Although the first Wesleyan Methodist and Roman Catholic (St. Joseph of Cluny Sisters) missionaries arrived in The Gambia in 1921 and 1922, respectively, the first Christian mission school was established in 1869 by the Anglicans (Perfect, 2016). Several other schools, including St Mary's Girls High school opened in Bathurst in 1915 (Perfect, 2016).

Due to the adoption of a dual system of governance: colony consisting of Banjul and Janjanbureh (formerly Bathurst and Georgetown and directly administered by the

Governor) and the protectorate (rest of the country administered indirectly by the colonial administrator and travelling commissioners through local kings and chiefs) plus the concentration of Christian missionaries and schools in the colony contributed to the current higher level of Western education in Banjul and surrounding areas (Barry, 2022). Other major reasons for the lower level of Western education in the protectorate was that the level of education provided by the colonial administration was elementary and hands-on (e.g., Joinery, Carpentry, Agricultural Science Cookery, Knitting, Bakery) and religious oriented (Latin and Bible Studies) rather than on more strategic and advanced areas like Law, Medicine and Economics); available in a few areas and to the privileged like sons of local chiefs – for proper records keeping and interpretation and translation purposes especially during visits of the colonial governor, colonial administrator and travelling commissioners (Ceesay, 2019); and raging wars between the Islamic marabouts and Soninkes (non-believers) (Barry, 2022). Although not assimilatory like the French, both education systems were designed produce obedient natives and meet the needs of the colonial masters (Ceesay, 2019). Since then, several other schools would eventually be opened in Bathurst (Banjul) and other parts of The Gambia.

Notable steps taken by the colonial government include passing the first education ordinance, creating a board of education and school inspectors in 1882 (Perfect, 2016) and establishing the Education Department in 1903 (Bouy, 2019). From its initial role of just providing oversight (teaching, the curriculum, teacher quality) to Christian mission schools, the first government school, Armitage High School, was established and upgraded to a secondary school in 1927 and 1945, respectively (Perfect, 2016). This remained the only government school until 1959 when Gambia High School was established through a merger of two former Methodist high schools following recommendations of the Baldwin Report of 1951 – a study commissioned to establish the aims, scope, content and methods of education (Perfect, 2016). Critical of the government's hands-off attitude and approach to education, the report recommended that, in addition to allowing missionaries to own schools, government should give aid/grants to mission schools and own a nondenominational school where everyone can attend irrespective of their religion (Baldwin, 1951). An earlier and equally important education review and report include the Ralph Allen Report of 1939 (Education in The Gambia – Present Organization and Possible Future Development)

which called for improvement in aspects including providing vocational training and scholarship opportunities for overseas studies and increasing the number of trained teachers (Barry, 2022). Despite these important shifts in education policy management by the colonial government, the highest level of education and teacher training in The Gambia at the time was still Standard 7 and provided by the Christian missionaries. However, the above reveals that education policy planning had started earlier than envisaged.

However, before the advent of Christianity and Western education in the mid-eighteenth century, Islam and Islamic education had been introduced to the Senegambia region since the eleventh century by North African traders (present day Mauritania) and proliferated in the later part of the nineteenth century by Islamic scholars through Islamic wars called jihad (Barry, 2022). Given that Islam and Islamic education – through informal education locally called 'Dara', was already deep-rooted in The Gambia and Gambians' suspicion that Christian missionaries' primary purpose of operating schools was to spread Christianity, the majority Muslim population resisted Western education (Jammeh, 2016). Their motivation to preserve Islamic education led to the establishment of Mohammedan School in Banjul (Bathurst at the time). Although the school operated a purely Islamic curriculum for some time, debates regarding the importance of Western education, including employment and political awareness began to garner pace. This eventually culminated in a hybrid system of education called Madrassah – the use of both Arabic and English as instructional languages. This form of education system has continued to take root in The Gambia following the sector's policy to integrate such schools into the conventional education system. It will thus, be interesting to find out whether the level of suspicion and reluctance to embrace Western education and westerner-originated management logics such as Weberian bureaucracy is still prevalent among Gambians.

After independence, the first comprehensive education policy, The Education Policy 1965 – 1975 was developed following a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) funded mission to survey the Gambian education system (Sleight, 1965). Among others, the policy aimed to expand education access to the protectorate/rural areas, improve teacher training, develop syllabuses for subjects such as English language and Arithmetic and teacher handbook (Sleight, 1965). While

equally led and funded by UNESCO and UNICEF, the development of the 1976 – 1986 education policy was more collaborative as it included national experts. The policy's key achievements include redesigning of the curriculum to suit the local context and change of former colonial era grammar schools and secondary schools to high schools and secondary technical schools, respectively. The latter would eventually fail due to inadequate qualified teachers in the technical field, equipment and negative perception of technical vocation. The above indicates that international agencies/donors played a key role in shaping the Gambia education system and policy direction. It also showed how strategic management as an approach to managing public organisations started and evolved. This could help explain strategic management's presence, predominance and influence, especially the strategic planning and network-based and collaborative schools in the Gambian primary and secondary education sector.

Around the late 1970s to early 1980s, the Ministry of Education was transformed to Ministry of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (Bouy, 2019). However, this was short-lived as it reverted back to Ministry of Education with the creation of the ministries of Youth and Sports and Culture (*ibid*). Until 1978, Gambia College, the first teacher training college was established. At around the same period, a lower-level education management structure called the Department of Education also existed. Although headed by a director and answerable to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education was much bigger and more powerful as it was responsible for key resources including finance and teachers (Bouy, 2019). To help address tensions and conflicts from this dual structural setup, the positions of Permanent Secretary and Director of Education were abolished and replaced by position of Chief Education Officer in 1988 as part of the 1988 – 2003 education policy programme (*ibid*). This move also saw the introduction of the positions of Deputy Chief Education Officers for planning, curriculum, services and schools (*ibid*). These events and changes have major implications for the current level of entrenchment and influence of Weberian bureaucracy's principles of official jurisdiction determined by administrative regulation and graded hierarchy and authority.

Upon the expiry of the 1976 – 1986 policy, its successor, the Education Policy 1988 – 2003, was formulated through an even more participative approach as a national

conference was held to capture key stakeholders' aspirations (Jammeh, 2016). A major restructuring and transformation would take place in 1995 when the 1988 – 2003 education policy was reviewed. The position of Deputy Chief Education Officer was changed to Director and the Chief Education Officer position was scrapped leading to a leaner power structure of Minister, Permanent Secretary (PS), Deputy Permanent Secretaries (DPS) and Directors (Bouy, 2019). This transformation also resulted in the creation of the Senior management Team (SMT) comprising the Minister, PS, DPs and Directors (headquarters and regional) and some new directorates like Information Technology and Human Resource (previously under the planning directorate) (*ibid*).

Furthermore, the same review revealed and addressed policy contradictions and recommendations including the need for providing more resources for primary education (*ibid*). Another major policy shift during the same period (2003), was the Ministry's adoption of the Education for All—Fast Track Initiative Partnership Sector-wide approach - adoption of basic education (uninterrupted education from grade 1 – 9) and thus the abolition of entrance examinations at the end of grades 6 and 9.

One of the most significant innovations in the sector is the introduction of the Joint Coordinating Committee Meeting (CCM) in 1996. Although initially held every quarter in Region 1, it was later restructured to include bi-monthly rotational meetings in various regions of the country, school/site visits and inclusion of all key stakeholders, including civil society, politicians, donors, school heads and parents. Perhaps the boldest and most hailed development in the education sector during the Second Republic is the introduction of Saint Mary's University Extension Programme in The Gambia in 1999 and its full transition into University of The Gambia in 2002.

The expiry of the 1988 – 2003 policy led to the development of the 2004 – 2015 policy. Given the significant achievements already made in expanding education and the quest to address the tension between access and quality of education among countries, the Ministry of Education shifted its focus to quality education (Department of State for Education, 2004). This culminated in developing quality assurance processes and the introduction of the performance management system, including service-level agreements for departments, units and staff. While there was initial scepticism and resistance to these changes, they quickly garnered space and acceptance due to their contribution to improved role clarity, accountability and

performance and organisational justice, especially regarding HR processes. Through this policy, deliberate efforts were made to decongest functions such as staff posting and confirmation from headquarters by increasing delegation to regional education directorates and creating an SMT at the regional level. Issues relating to qualified and graduate teacher shortage including training of Gambian teachers to degree level at the University of The Gambia commenced in 2008 (Bouy, 2019). This was done to avert a likely crisis if many foreign teachers (mostly Ghanaians, Nigerians and Sierra Leonians) were to abruptly leave the teaching field or The Gambia (*ibid*). These and other issues such as the large size of the teaching force and delays in appointing and paying teachers' salaries led to the creation of Committee for Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teacher (Public Service Commission, 2013). Among others, it was empowered by the Public Service Commission (PSC) to appoint, promote and discipline staff (mostly teachers) in grades 6 to 8. This has help greatly in addressing endemic Human Resource (HR) issues including complaints due to perceived discrimination. This would also be when MoBSE-donor relations would change significantly from high donor dominance - where donors would dictate where and how their funds would be used and provide external consultants to the sector, to one that is highly respectful, consultative, informed and driven by sector's local needs and priorities (Bouy, 2019). This improved ability in identifying priority areas was enabled by the introduction and conduct of the public expenditure review of the education in 2006 (Barma et al, 2014).

The high proliferation and weak coordination of Islamic schools (Madrassah) and low enrolment, retention and completion rates of girls at the senior secondary level, guidelines for provision of government assistance to Madrassah (Islamic schools) to fully incorporate them into the conventional education system; and Girl-Friendly School Initiative Scholarship Trust Fund for Girls; were developed and introduced in 1997 and 2004, respectively. 2004 also saw the establishment of the National Training Authority (NTA) to oversee and regulate tertiary education institutions, regional education directorates to monitor the decentralization process and the takeover of schools (Local Government Act, 2002) and the introduction of Senior Management Teams (SMTs) at the ministry, regional education directorates and schools.

In its quest to improve school management and academic performance, the Ministry in collaboration with DFID commissioned the BESPOR project in 2005 (World Bank,

2009). It helped the Gambian education sector in adopting a sector-wide approach and in improving community participation, quality of teacher training and school development (Development Aid, 2015), including participatory performance management and the development of School Management Manual (including Minimum Standards for performance, School Management Committees and school management plans) (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2017).

As part of its indigenisation of the Gambian education curriculum, education in major Gambian languages (Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola, Serer, Sarahuli and Manjago) was introduced in grades 1 to 3 and from grade 4 as a subject in 2005. The enactment of the Children's Act, 2005 further consolidated the Gambian 1997 constitutional and 2004 education policy requirements for free and compulsory basic education - Grades 1 to 9 (Children's Act, 2005; Department for International Development, 2011), contributed to girls' education-friendly initiatives including Girls' Scholarship Trust Fund and the former President, Yahya Jammeh's President's Empowerment for Girls Education Project (PEGEP).

Key episodes in 2006 include the introduction of Public Expenditure Review and commencement of the World Bank Third Education Project - Phase II (US\$77.2 million). This would coincide with the former president, Yahya Jammeh's, election for a third 5-year mandate and increased political and financial (budgetary allocation and sponsorship) support for girls' education. It would perhaps be in 2007 when the Ministry of Education witnessed its greatest structural and policy transformation due to the separation of the education portfolio into two: Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, responsible for nursery, primary and secondary education and Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) for tertiary education. This was due to concerns among stakeholders that management was spending more resources on tertiary education at the expense of primary and secondary education. As part of the participatory performance management initiative and performance/quality improvement drive, cluster monitoring and early grade reading assessment were also introduced in the same year.

Adopting the EFA Initiative and abolishing examinations at grades 6 and 9 – transition points to upper basic (lower secondary) and senior secondary levels were without costs and challenges. MoBSE saw academic performance/quality deteriorate

significantly (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2004; 2016; Save the Children, 2005). To address the above, the National Assessment Test (NAT) was introduced in grades 3, 5 and 8 (Save the Children, 2005). To increase stakeholder participation and improve the quality of teaching and learning, the Joint CCM was restructured through the introduction of bimonthly rotational meetings in various regions of the country, school/site visits and inclusion of all key stakeholders including civil society, politicians, donors, school heads and parents in 2008 (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2015). Furthermore, it led to developing a medium-term plan (2008 – 2011), conduct of second public expenditure review, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Constitution and Minimum Standards adopted in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

In line with legal and policy requirements and ratification of global initiatives, including Education for All Initiative, for free and compulsory basic education, the School Improvement Program/Grant (SIP/SIG) and School Management Manual were introduced in 2011 (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2011). Having achieved these and other key milestones and coinciding with end of its life, DFID would end support for BESPOR Project. The School Management Manual was reviewed in 2017 to incorporate five-year school development planning, the Minimum Standards for Schools, Parent Teacher Association and School Management Committee constitution and Performance Management System (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2017).

Recognising the benefits of stakeholder involvement and collaboration in policy evolution and implementation, the Education Sector 2016 – 2030 Policy formulation was even more inclusive as it included teachers, traditional leaders, women's group, youth, employers, students, parents, politicians, non-governmental and international organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016). Additionally, its highly inclusive vision: "Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Quality Education for sustainable Development" augurs well for Weberian bureaucratic value of equality and collaborative modes of strategy-making.

Major political and organisational developments in the recent past include a change of leadership (new government and minister) following the presidential elections in

December 2016 and the introduction of online/distance learning across education levels due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools have witnessed a returned to face-to-face learning since September 2021.

4.1.5.2 Education system and sector performance

The Gambian education system has witnessed some notable changes since Western education was introduced by Christian missionaries in the colonial era. Initially, while the Standard format (Standard I -VII) was used, there were key differences in its implementation in the colony and protectorate. Mainly, this was divided into the infant (Standard I - IV) and primary (Standard V - VIII) stages in the colony but combined in the protectorate (Barry, 2022). The elementary (primary) and secondary system was introduced in 1959 following significant changes in education policy and coverage including the introduction of district authorities to manage schools in the protectorate and establishment of the West African Examinations Council in 1952 to assess students for the Ordinary Level School Certificate (Form 5) and Advanced Level School Certificate (Form 6) (*ibid*). Other key changes include transition to the Primary (6 years), Middle (3 years) and High (3 years) education format following the development of the 1988 – 2005 education policy (*ibid*) and Basic Education (9 years of uninterrupted education) and Secondary (3 years) levels in 2003 after the Gambia joined the Education for All (EFA) global initiative and development of the 2004 – 2015 Education Policy.

The Gambia's current education system is based on a 6-3-3-4-2 cycle – meaning 6 years of Lower Basic (Primary); 3 years of Upper Basic (Middle/Lower Secondary); 3 years of Senior Secondary (High School); 4 years of Undergraduate and 2 years of postgraduate (master's degree) education¹¹. It is important to note that the six years of primary education level is preceded by 3 to 4 years (depending on when the child is enrolled by his parents) of Early Childhood Development (pre-school). Official school enrolment ages ranges from 3 – 6 years for earlier childhood development/pre-school, 7 - 12 years for primary, 13 – 15 years for lower secondary and 16 – 18 years upper secondary establishments (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013). However, this

¹¹ Postgraduate programmes, especially PhD are mostly run through collaboration with other universities.

is sometimes difficult to realise due to the late start of schooling and application of repetition policies in most senior secondary schools.

In line with the Gambia 1997 Constitution, Education For All – Fast-Track Initiative, 2003, Education Sector Policy 2004 – 2015, Children’s Act, 2005 and Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030, provisions for free and compulsory education for every Gambian child, the 6 years of lower basic (primary) and 3 years of upper basic (lower secondary) education provides 9 years of uninterrupted basic education to all Gambian children (Save the Children, 2005; Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2004; 2016). While most students transit to senior secondary school for another 3 years upon completing/passing the Gambia Basic Education Examinations (GABECE), a significant number opt for or end up in vocational and technical education and training schools with various levels of training and durations. Senior secondary graduates tend to pursue academic degree programmes or equivalent professional programmes at universities in The Gambia and abroad.

There are two main categories of basic (nursery and primary) and secondary education institutions by management type: public (government and grant-aided) and private (conventional private schools and Madrassah). While grant-aided schools comprised mainly of Christian missionary schools governed by their own Board but receive subventions from the government in the form of teachers’ salaries and school development grant, Madrassah refers to formal Islamic Arabic education institutions that use Arabic as a medium of instruction and offer core subjects: English, Mathematics, Social and Environmental Studies and Science (Save the Children, 2005; Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016; 2019). Although they receive grants from government for the salaries of English teachers provided by MoBSE, Madrassah are privately owned and managed.

The sector’s performance has registered significant achievements in many areas including, access, enrolment and gender equality. As of 2022, it has registered gross enrolment rates of 104.7%, 73.7% and 52.7% at the primary, lower secondary and senior secondary levels in 2019 respectively (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2022). It equally witnessed an impressive gross completion rate of 88.1%, 62.6% and 44.1% at the primary, lower secondary and senior secondary level,

respectively (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2022). Furthermore, it has achieved gender parity at the primary and lower secondary levels (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2019).

These remarkable achievements, despite its challenging political, sociocultural and economic environments, are due to huge investment in the sector (increased national budgetary allocation and donor support) which has resulted in larger number of schools, trained teachers and incentives for teachers in special subjects (Mathematics, English and Sciences) and deprived areas; children with special needs and innovative programmes including multi-grade teaching and double shifting. Other major drivers of its level of achievement include high institutional capacity from training and mentoring a core group of staff in the Policy, Planning and Budgeting Unit in the 1980s and 1990s; high continuity of senior staff and institutional memory due to a strong internal and external coalition of stakeholders and legitimacy among the citizenry - insulating it from political interference, adoption of a sector-wide collaborative and performance management approaches and implementation of robust cultural change and internal communication strategies (Barma et al., 2014).

4.1.6 Summary

The colonial, political, legal, socioeconomic context of The Gambia and its primary and secondary educational sector setting provides high relevance for investigating the applicability of Weberian bureaucracy, a western originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation and strategic management, a modern field of scholarly inquiry. Besides being an under-researched non-Western developing country context, the Gambian primary and secondary education is the oldest and largest government ministry. Since it is one of the most proliferated management logics globally (Torfinn, 2020) mainly through colonialism (Max Weber Stiftung, 2021), a former European (British) colony and culturally diverse developing country such as The Gambia provides a suitable case study context for understanding not only the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy but how it conditions its decision-making processes. While the above analysis reveals that the Gambian context is not conducive to establishing a Weberian bureaucracy, it equally indicates that its successful implementation could help address performance issues due to politics, low economic development, and ethnic and clan culture.

Given The Gambia and MoBSE's high dependence on international donors and their influence on its adoption of strategic management approaches including strategic planning, the communal nature of the Gambian society and potential positive impacts (on autonomy and resultant strategic space) of proposed constitutional provisions, including the National Assembly's confirmatory powers regarding the appointment and dismissal of public servants coupled with the relative high legitimacy of MoBSE among its Gambians and international stakeholders, makes MoBSE highly suitable for assessing the potential applicability of theories of strategic management and their influence on strategic decision making.

Relying heavily on empirical evidence, the following sections (4.2 to 4.6) further examines and explains how The Gambian context shape the applicability and influence of Weberian bureaucracy and the strategic planning approach to strategic management and their relationship on decision-making in MoBSE.

4.2 The presence of Weberian bureaucracy in the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), The Gambia

4.2.1 Introduction

This section examines the presence of Weberian bureaucratic organising principles: official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation; graded authority and hierarchy; merit-based system; official communication through the written file; rule and procedure-based operations; and permanent/protected employment (Weber 1964) and how they frame/condition the decision-making practices of MoBSE. It aims to answer the question “is Weberian bureaucracy detectable in the basic and secondary education sector of The Gambia, and to what extent?”. The study achieves this by providing an operational definition of each of the six Weberian bureaucratic principles; confirming their presence formally – national and organisational laws, regulations, policies and other management tools; and empirically - participants’ accounts, observations and researcher experience on how they frame decision-making. The study findings reveal that contextual influences especially cultural, colonial, political and economic, led to a moderate consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy. The chapter further discusses how these findings confirm or contradict previous studies on contextual influences and the relevance and effectiveness of Weberian bureaucracy in a non-Western public administrative setting. The section concludes by providing a concluding summary of the research findings.

Table 4.2.1: Operational definition of Weberian bureaucratic principles

Principle	Operational definition
Official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This refers to the existence of an official and clear mandate for an organisation. This can be provided for by either a national constitution, an act of parliament, byelaw (including local authorities, corporations, and associations) or their accompanying regulations, policies and procedures manuals. ✓ Formally, its presence is also determined to some extent by the level of consistency and correspondence among the various laws, regulations and policies of an organisation’s sector/industry.

Graded authority and hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presence of relevant HR systems and tools (e.g. scheme of service for each civil service and organisational cadre, comprehensive and consistence terms of reference/job descriptions for each organisational function and role, pay scale, etc.) ✓ Full/high application and adherence to the Human Resource (HR) systems and tools mentioned above and reciprocal respect for the authority of the various organisational staff categories.
Merit-based system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Occupation of organisational positions and equitable access to organisational services and reward of organisational members based solely on merit (suitable educational/professional qualification and experience, performance of the candidate at entry-level examinations).
Office management through the written file	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existence of records (data collection and reporting) and archival/database management system. ✓ Existence of an effective internal and external communication system: top-down, bottom-up and lateral). ✓ Adoption and use of appropriate/modern communication technology for effective tracing and retrieval of past documents/decisions. ✓ Only those issues that have been sent/forwarded to the relevant authority in writing or through other formal channels are dealt with.
Rule and procedure-based operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presence and consistent application of public service and organisational rules and procedures in all official business. ✓ Absence or minimal reliance on personal discretion and judgement in decision-making.
Permanent/protected employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existence of a career path in the civil service in general and case study organisation in particular – most staff

	<p>serving up to retirement unless for voluntary resignation and retirement (including for reasons such as health, family, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Low/infrequent dismissal of staff except for gross misconduct. ✓ Staff retention and payment of at least base salary during economic and health crises (e.g. Covid-19).
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Source: Author's illustration from the literature

4.2.1.1 *Official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation*

Legal and policy mandate of MoBSE

The importance of the official and fixed jurisdiction by law and administrative regulation over other Weberian bureaucracy's principles is that all formal organisations especially those in the public sector, must first derive their mandate through an Act of parliament or in some cases, an executive declaration. Moreover, adhering to this principle will ensure authority and legitimacy over and minimise role conflict among and within organisations (Weber, 1964). Clear organisational, team and individual roles and accountabilities provide a sense of purpose and thus improve task and goal attainment (Cameron and Green 2010; Bratton et al, 2020). Until recently (enactment of the Basic and Secondary Education Act in 2018), the management of education in The Gambia was guided by various legal instruments and organisational structures, including the first Education Ordinance and a board of education and school inspectors in 1882 (colonial era), Laws of The Gambia, 1963 (Chapter 63) and Education Act, 1992. However, the separation of the education portfolio in 2007 into two ministries: Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) resulted in MoBSE's mandate being confined to only the basic and secondary education levels - early childhood development (kindergarten/nursery), lower basic (primary), upper basic (middle) and senior secondary (high). The Basic and Secondary Education of Act, 2018 was eventually enacted to incorporate this and other strategic and operational changes. Section 1 of the above Act clearly stipulates the broad mandate of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (formerly Department of State for Education):

“...the management and development of education services in The Gambia, the registration of teachers and control of schools and to make provisions for matters connected therewith”.

This was confirmed by Senior internal stakeholder 4:

“Anything relating to children’s falls under the ministry of education”. While the above policy and structural change was attributed to the need to address challenges due to the very large and growing education portfolio and the level of importance of education to the former president, Yahya Jammeh (this was the only portfolio with two ministries and among his priority sectors including agriculture, health and infrastructure), Senior external stakeholder 2 clarified that it was due to concerns among stakeholders that lower levels of education were not given the attention they deserve:

“Based on my experience, I felt that that was the case. Definitely, the time that management was spending on tertiary education compared to primary, lower and senior secondary. But it is not to say that we could not cope with the workload.”

Recognising the importance of fixed jurisdiction and role clarity, Section 1, subsection 4 of the Basic and Secondary Education Act, 2018, further clarified that while the Minister responsible for primary and secondary education may extend the application of the Act or any of its provisions to any formal institution at the primary and secondary level, it does not apply to religious institutions in which any instruction in secular subjects is limited to reading and writing. Earlier and similar interventions by the education sector (before its separation into two portfolios in 2007) include the revisiting and clarifying functions and interactions between and among directorates as part of the 1988 – 2003 education policy review in 1995. This approach to continually adjusting organisational and team roles shows that rigidly adhering to an organisation’s purpose in changing environmental realities is likely to lead to poor performance or even total failure (Nadler and Shaw, 1995; Cameron and Green, 2014). This had helped among others, improve intra and inter-team relations among staff. The separation of the education portfolio has been without challenges. For example, while Gambia College (School of Education) is now under the purview of MoHERST, its teacher training programmes: Diploma in Early Childhood Development, Advanced Diploma in Primary Education and Advanced Diploma in

Secondary Education (formerly called Certificate in Early Childhood Development, Primary Teacher's Certificate and Higher Teacher's Certificate respectively) and Bachelor of Arts in Education, are for the basic and secondary education levels. This jurisdictional conflict/inconsistency and other problems have budgetary and operational implications. Thus, there was a need for more coordination between the two ministries to ensure effective teacher training delivery at Gambia College and on-the-job teacher training schools. To help address these issues and to ensure coherence and synergy, the two ministries have now developed a single education policy for the sector (Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030) with clear roles and responsibilities for each of the ministries and their satellite institutions, directorates and departments. Premised on key national and international development blueprints: Gambia's Vision 2020, Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the policy aims to improve human capital by reducing poverty. Hence, the Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030 goal of *“Accessible, Equitable and Inclusive Quality Education for Sustainable Development”* (MoBSE, 2016).

Furthermore, the Local Government Act, 2002 provides for the gradual transfer of authority and budgetary provisions for opening and managing public schools and monitoring of private schools at the basic and secondary level (Early Childhood Development and Grades 1 – 12) to local government authorities – done in the context of the Gambia Government's decentralisation process. As regards the right to education, Chapter IV, Section 30 and Chapter VI, Section 57 of the Constitution of The Gambia, 1997 and Final Draft Constitution of The Republic of the Gambia 2020, respectively, provide for the right of all persons to equal educational opportunities and the provision of the required environment including facilities for the full realisation of that right. In addition, basic education shall be free, compulsory and made available to all. Further to confirming the existence of legal, policy and other management tools stipulating and clarifying MoBSE' mandate, empirical evidence also indicate that they are utilised extensively by its senior management, teachers and other stakeholders during decision-making:

“At the level of MoBSE, we have three tiers of decision-making: we abide by the rules and regulations – that is the law. We have the Education Act. It is there. We have the education policy, which is teased out from the Education

Act and the various directorates also have their policies.” (Senior Internal Stakeholder 1)

“...most of the decisions we take are all guided; they are all referenced. On our part as HR practitioners, we make use of course mainly the Act. In terms of hierarchy, you have the constitution that talks about the public service and that trickles down to the Public Service Act of 1991 and out of the Act, we have Regulations, General Orders, Code of Conduct, Civil Service Personnel Procedures manual.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

Based on the above, the presence of Weberian bureaucracy’s principle of official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation can be considered high.

4.2.1.2 Graded authority and hierarchy

Evidence of this principle includes formal existence and application of relevant human resource management processes and systems such as scheme of service for various civil service cadres; civil service integrated pay scale (administered by Personnel Management Office, Gambia’s civil service human resource department); JDs for each organisational department, unit and staff position; performance management system (including service-level-agreements); and stakeholder communication policy and consultation mechanisms:

“Every office and officer have his or her terms of reference” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)

Senior external stakeholder 2 noted that the existence and deployment of these tools have ensured that *“interactions between the directorates, functions were made very clear”* and have reduced role conflict among departments and staff, curbed power excesses among senior staff and increased accountability:

“That was the time that even for their junior staff, a director would want them to engage in work outside their Terms of Reference (TOR), and the junior staff would say ah Director! This is not part of my TOR. If I don’t deliver on my TOR, at the end of the day I will held to account. So, it introduced that kind of culture in the Ministry”.

While confirming the existence of TOR for various organisational and staff categories and their importance as highlighted above, Stakeholder 2 explained that these were further translated into service-level-agreements:

“When we started introducing the service-level-agreements. In fact, it started from the directors coming down because the directors also had to, based on the terms of reference of the directorate. Some service-level-agreements were drafted for each directorate to the school level where headteachers had their own which they signed with the Regional Director. The teachers had their own, which they signed with their headteachers.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

This was part of efforts by the sector to address deteriorating levels of quality of education due, in part, to the high expansion of education, by implementing a robust performance management system. Regarding stakeholder participation and consultation, a cross analysis of the interview transcripts show that the graded hierarchy and authority principle was highly adhered to. As stipulated by Weber (1964), these were manifested in top-down, bottom-up and horizontal forms of engagement and communication. Evidence of a top-down hierarchical approach to decision-making are contained in the following interview excerpts:

“If there is an issue at hand at the regional level, it is the Director and probably, if he needs the support of the principal education officer (PEO) and the senior education officers (SEOs). If it is related to a school, the first point we will take reference from is the cluster monitor who supervises the cluster. That cluster monitor must be informed about the situation. If he is not informed, we will allow him to make his own findings get back to us [regional education directorate] before we make any intervention. He is our technical adviser for any issue in the cluster. We don't jump the gun”. (Senior internal stakeholder 3)

As regards the requirement to go through or exhaust lower-levels of authority (bottom-up) when dealing with an issue, the following participants' comments indicate that this was highly observed:

“...we have a cluster monitor, and he is responsible for certain schools. Whenever we have an issue that has to do with the regional office, it's either (...) in most cases, we have to go through the cluster monitor. The cluster monitor works out what should be done for us at the regional level. But sometimes, you know, which is very rare, for us to go directly to the director.

“...any mission school you go [Catholic schools], the parish priest will serve as the manager. So, he is also involved in administration. So, there are certain documents, before you go to the office [Catholic Education Secretariat], you have to pass through the manager...” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 10: 2)

When decision-making involves stakeholders or organisational units/departments of the same hierarchy, their roles and authority are called into play in arriving at a final decision (Cameron and Green, 2010, Bratton et al., 2020). For example, despite occupying the same organisational hierarchy, the Directorate of Administration through its Principal Assistant Secretaries (PASs) is empowered to review/scrutinise reports from the Directorate of Planning, Policy, Analysis, Research and Budgeting (e.g. assessing applications to open new private schools) and Directorate of Human Resources (e.g. staff seniority and promotion list) and provide recommendations to the Permanent Secretary for approval of otherwise.

“...after the planning unit goes to the school to see their level of preparedness, then they will send their findings to us, the admin. section so that we can make recommendations or otherwise to the honourable minister through the permanent secretary (PS) to seek for approval on their behalf. HR has the database of the seniority list of all the staff. So, when it comes to promotion, they cannot just say because they have the data, they have whatever it takes. We still have to concur with whatever is on the seniority list and give approval” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

“The regional directorate was somehow at loggerheads with the school because the then principal knew that they have no power over us because the school is managed by a Board”. (Middle-level internal stakeholder 3)

The above communication and stakeholder consultations approach significantly adheres to Weber's (1964) 'jurisdictional competence' as higher authority departments/units and senior staff have not taken over the roles of lower-level offices and staff.

To ensure alignment with environmental realities, MoBSE (sometimes through the Personnel Management Office) has undertaken periodic reviews of its HR processes and instruments. This is indicated by the following remarks by a key senior external stakeholder:

“Meanwhile, the consultants are doing their groundwork to look at each of those scores critically and they’ll develop a new pay and grading system. Before, it used to be around 21 points. Then, it was reduced to 12 points plus fixed. It is likely when the assignment is completed, it will be less than 12 points – it will be like in the form of a band (...) will accommodate (...) because the problem with the current structure is that after some time, positions like the permanent secretary and quite a number of positions were outside of the structure. So, they increased salaries of those categories of workers, and they became fixed.”

(Senior external stakeholder 3)

The Personnel Management Office has now completed the above exercise (development of a new pay and grading system) and it is currently being implemented. While teachers felt disadvantaged compared to other civil service cadres including public health and nursing, their complaints and concerns have been taken up by Gambia Teachers Union. This is to ensure internal equity and thus improve motivation and morale (Bratton et al., 2013).

Although geared towards improving its efficiency and overall performance, these actions have further consolidated the graded hierarchy and authority principle. However, these innovative and flexible approaches support bureaucracy’s advocates’ view that it is equally if not more efficient, innovative, personal, responsive and flexible than other organising forms (du Gay, 2000, 2005; Meier and Hill, 2005; Peters, 2018; 2010).

4.1.1.3 *Merit-based system*

Teacher training

Until 2017, the teacher training programmes were free for all Gambians. Enrolment criteria reflect the level of training. Hence the Advanced Diploma in Secondary Education has higher entry requirements than the Advanced Diploma in Primary Education and Diploma in Early Childhood Development programmes.

Entry requirements and the number of intakes have been influenced by three main factors: the attractiveness of the teaching profession, adequacy of qualified teaching staff and female representation in the teaching field.

Attractiveness of the teaching profession

Teacher trainees largely comprise economically disadvantaged high school leavers as most affluent high school graduates are absorbed into universities and other higher institutions of learning in The Gambia and abroad. This was made worse following the introduction of the Saint Mary's University (Halifax, Canada) extension programme in 1999 and the establishment of the University of The Gambia in 2002. This is because many experienced teachers did not return to the teaching field after completing their degree programmes. Further to leaving for better-paying jobs in the private and third sectors, especially international agencies and public enterprises, this period coincided with the proliferation of commercial banks (mostly Nigerian subsidiaries) and their high attractiveness to university graduates. Hence, the introduction of scholarship bonds by MoBSE to address this high attrition. Although remunerated in line with the civil service integrated pay scale, the negative perception of the teaching profession among many Gambians – the belief that teachers die poor (due to their perceived low pay), has discouraged many people from going into the teaching profession.

Adequacy of teaching staff

Weber (1964) posits that bureaucrat's social esteem and status tend to be low when demand for their expertise is weak. MoBSE has been grappling with the shortage of qualified teachers due to:

- the rapid expansion of access to provide universal basic education (as part of legal provisions: Constitution of The Gambia, 1997; Children's Act, 2005 and ratification of the global Education for All Initiative in 2003);
- high attrition of qualified and experienced teachers to the private sector, international NGOs, public enterprises and other public institutions such as the security sector (the Police and Military as part of their graduate recruitment drive for cadet officers): *“The Police, probably, those whom I finished school with, some of them are now officers in charge (OCs) and commissioners, and I am still struggling with cluster monitor position, Grade 8. It is sometimes discouraging.”* (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)
- inadequate amenities and suitable accommodation in the rural and deprived/hard-to-reach areas. Teachers have had to grapple with the problem of lack/inadequate accommodation in some communities due to the

conservative and distrusting nature of some communities: *“Normally it is Region 6 where you have (...) sorry to call the tribe, [name withheld]. You know they are not very accommodating to male teachers. You know they jealously guard their wives. They don’t trust outsiders staying close to their women. So, they are not very accommodating when it comes to those kinds of things* (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

However, the problems above have been addressed to a great extent by:

- sponsoring only teachers opting for studying relevant programmes at tertiary education institutions.
- provision and prioritisation of university sponsorship for staff (teachers) in deprived and remote areas: *“...they [MRC Holland, a Dutch charity train teachers and most of their training is concentrated in Region 6 and 5. Teachers for Region 6 and 5 because those are the regions that teachers normally don’t want to go to. It’s kind of a motivation for those teachers”*. (Senior internal stakeholder 4).
- regular and strict monitoring of sponsored students: *“we have put in place a system (...) you must give us your results from the university every term to confirm that you are there”* (Senior external stakeholder 5);
- introduction of scholarship bonds to ensure teachers return to the teaching field upon completion of their study programmes.
- the hiring of untrained teachers by the regional education directorates or schools.
- construction of staff quarters by MoBSE, donors and communities: *“...now, some of the schools that MRC Holland are building have been solarised so that you know, they build quarters for teachers. Putting solar there helps. It’s a way of motivating those teachers to have some comfort and have the privilege of having those electrical appliances, but there are still a lot of schools that don’t have electricity”* (Senior internal stakeholder 4).

Furthermore, the introduction of multi-grade teaching; double-shifting; graduate, risk (for teachers serving in conflict-prone areas); provincial, hard-to-reach and special subject (English, Mathematics, Sciences) allowances and volunteering of some

graduates to teach in their native communities has helped immensely in addressing the teacher shortage issue:

“...there are some regions where you have what we call risk allowance. Here in Region 1, we have quite a number of schools that have afternoon studies. Upcountry, it is either risk [allowance] or double shifting. So, finance has an influence on postings. Some will struggle tooth and nail not to be moved from these schools. When you go to the schools that have risk allowance, because they can gain about 40 to 60% of their salary for places declared as risky because of their proximity to the Casamance because of the war and things like that. Places like Kaimo, Kanilai and Sintet. Some would even want to leave Region 1 to go to these places. Sometimes if you have double shift, you can see that they will gain about 90% of their salary. So, the finance aspect is very important”. (Senior external stakeholder 5)

The recent (March 2022) military confrontation between the Senegalese military and Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebels in the Casamance region of Senegal, widely believed to be retaliation by the Senegalese government for the killing of two Senegalese soldiers and detention of the seven others a month earlier confirms Senior external stakeholder 5's statement regarding the need for incentives such as risk allowance to attract staff to conflict prone areas. In addition, all schools in the border villages were closed and reopened only after some relative calm in the area.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for improving the attractiveness of the teaching field is the introduction of graduate teachers' allowance. This has contributed to more qualified teacher trainee candidates at Gambia College and significantly reduced the attrition rate of graduate teachers (MoBSE and self-sponsored) to other sectors and organisations. As seen in Senior external stakeholder narrative and emphasis on '*the finance aspect is very important*', extrinsic (financial) motive (Bratton et al., 2020; Perry and Hondeghe, 2008) is a key attraction for many teachers and indeed public servants. This could be due to the relatively low pay of teachers, and economic development including large households, extended families and high dependency ratio (GBoS, 2013) and cultural pressures on wealthy and employed persons to provide for their close and extended family members and friends. However, it is important to note that many highly qualified and experienced teachers have retired or

vow to retire in the teaching field because of their passion for teaching, high person-job fit or ability owing to their training and motivation for public service in general (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008). Besides, a favourable person-environment fit (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008) driven by an improved psychological contract (Rousseau, 1998) with MoBSE due to attractive non-monetary benefits (Bratton et al., 2020) including opportunities for professional development including training to degree or higher levels both in The Gambia has (e.g. MRC Holland Foundation sponsorships for teachers in regions 5 and 6 and remote areas) and abroad (government's prioritisation of public servants when awarding own and development partners scholarships for overseas studies) and equal opportunities and job security (Weber, 1964, du Gay, 2000; 2005) has been a major attraction for a reasonable number of number of people to the education sector and public service in the recent past.

Female representation in the teaching field

The significant gender gap among teaching staff has resulted in the implementation of positive action/representative bureaucratic (Kingsley, 1944) measures in recruiting female teacher intakes by Gambia College (School of Education). However, they must meet the pass mark to graduate and attain qualified teacher status. This has helped bridge the gender gap in the teaching profession and in providing role models and special needs of female students at the school level.

Teacher recruitment

During the colonial era up to the establishment of Gambia College in 1978, Christian missionaries, who owned and operated conventional schools were responsible for teacher recruitment:

“When I came into the system, what used to happen is that priests used to go out themselves to search for teachers.” (Senior external stakeholder 7)

These teacher trainees, formerly called pupil teachers, were mentored by experienced teachers until they were able to man a class (unqualified teacher). They are then promoted to qualified teacher upon completing a teacher training course at Gambia College. Regarding postings, people were posted to various schools based on need rather than on merit (qualification, experience). Also, rotation of teachers to the various regions and schools was not widely practiced. Hence most teachers spent their entire

teaching career in a single community (school). The few female teachers at the time were never posted upcountry due to the high prevalence of a sexist mentality against female education and formal work:

“Because during that time, people upcountry do not send their girl child to school. They thought the girl child was meant for the husband and kitchen.”

(Senior external stakeholder 7)

This was also to enable them to serve as role models to girls in their native communities.

This was in stark contrast with the recruitment and promotion approach of other civil service organisations:

“for the civil service, for them to give you a position of responsibility, you have to sit a government exam. When you are in the job, you have to sit an exam before you get promoted. You can be there for ten years without promotion if you don’t pass that test.” (Senior external stakeholder 7)

The above staff recruitment and posting processes would eventually change to a more bureaucratic system with the introduction of the role of the Education Secretary and eventual transfer of the role to a non-religious person in [date withheld]. The following excerpts from an interview with Senior External Stakeholder 7 provide supporting evidence for the above decision-making practices as regards teacher recruitment:

“Then, it evolved to getting somebody to become education secretary. Then it was different after my qualification because we had one priest who was in charge of education and that was Fr. [name withheld]. After, Fr. [name withheld] came and so on and so on until you had the last one who was Fr [name withheld]. Then from that, they had a priestly meeting and decided that the education secretary position should not be handled by priests. Priests should concentrate on their ministry.” (Senior external stakeholder 7)

Further to indicating that the merit-based system in the Gambian schools was generally low, evidence from the above account corroborates Baldwin’s (1951) findings that the colonial government had a hand-off attitude and approach to education in The Gambia. Hence, his recommendations included the provision of aid/grants to mission schools and the need for government to operate schools,

including a nondenominational school where everyone could attend irrespective of their religion (Baldwin, 1951). Since then and the establishment of Gambia High School, the first non-denominational government school in 1959 and the eventual establishment of Gambia College to address teacher training needs, the government's involvement in education service delivery after independence has witnessed a rapid increase. Government is now the biggest education service provider at the primary and secondary levels. However, Christian missionary, Islamic and private schools have also witnessed some high proliferation during the same period. Due to the high operational cost of running schools and in line with the aforementioned colonial era recommendations for providing aid to mission schools, a significant proportion of these are now grant-aided schools but continue to operate per government policy.

Teacher recruitment processes and practices vary across education stakeholders. While government-sponsored teacher trainees are expected to work for the government upon completion of their training at School of Education, Gambia College, they can opt for grant-aided and private schools. Given the large number of schools and geographical scope of government and Catholic mission schools, amidst inadequate qualified teaching staff, senior management of schools, especially those in the provinces, are allowed to recruit trained and untrained teachers temporarily pending approval from regional education directorates and Ministry or secretariats and Boards of granted-aided and private schools.

Key differences exist regarding how postings are done in government, the Catholic Education Mission (grant-aided and second-biggest education service provider), and private/board schools. While MoBSE posts teachers to the various regional education directorates for onward distribution to schools, the Catholic Education Mission and other grant-aided and private schools post teachers directly to schools. Once in the schools, headteachers are responsible for assigning teachers/staff to various streams, shifts, grades and classrooms based on their qualification, specialisation and experience.

Although recruitment and postings are normally done through formal committees and through consultations with regional education directors, headteachers and other key stakeholders; this is not usually the case in some private schools as their proprietors

and family members, friends and donors tend to have total control over postings and other HR matters.

“I know the [proprietor] has a strong say in that process. Because for them, especially in the [name withheld] communities, you know, they have links like citizens abroad who always contribute money and whatever, annually, to carry out certain projects at the Madrassah. So, those who are involved in that contribution at that level, the diaspora level, their family members are always very strong in the Madrassah. So, they have a say in decision-making and whatever. So that’s how it operates.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6).

Another major difference between private schools (including Madrassah) and government and grant-aided schools is that the former does not receive direct financial support from MoBSE in the form School Improvement Grant (SIG) and payment of teachers’ salaries. These schools, thus, still charge school fees and other levies to enable them to meet their operational needs. This has affected the ability of some private schools’ ability to implement specific quality assurance measures, especially as regards the required minimum performance standards.

Teacher reward including promotion

Promotion in MoBSE, including government schools, is largely based on seniority. In addition, due to its professionalised nature, it has relied heavily on internal promotions:

“The other thing is that instead of our officers applying for promotion, we go through the list of the staff that we have, look at the most senior and qualified and send their names for promotion. We’ve stopped advertising vacancies for senior-level staff such as senior education officers, Directors and Permanent Secretary. We promote based on seniority and performance. The same applies to the teaching cadre.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

However, merit, including qualification and performance, are also key considerations for staff promotion.

“...notwithstanding that [seniority], does not automatically qualify you for certain promotions. You also need to develop yourself over time (...) you have people, although coming later, they develop themselves, and they’ve got the required

qualifications to even be taken from the classroom to admin or HR.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

The above participant’s accounts are validated by the following provision in the Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013:

“After confirmation of appointment, the officer’s performance and conduct shall be annually evaluated through the regular completion of an appropriate performance appraisal instrument which shall be submitted by the Head of Department or Permanent Secretary to the Public Service Commission for appropriate action.” (Public Service Commission, 2013)

Although abandoned over the past few decades, the need for an effective civil service workforce has led to the revival of the civil service entrance and promotional examinations. This is formally stipulated in the Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct, Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013 (p.8):

“To maintain high standards of efficiency and proficiency in the service there shall be admission examinations for entry to the Civil Service.”

“The procedure for recommending appointments and promotions are contained in the Act, Regulations and Schemes of Service. All such recommendations must take merit into account.”

The following statements indicate that grant-aided schools perhaps implement a more merit and performance-based promotions system:

“When we come to promotion, we check whether they were really fit for the position. Because there was no bias in it. When we check and we see what you can do and what level you can go, we promote you. We look at records, performance and everything.” (Senior external stakeholder 7)

“Now the leadership in one of our schools was not good and the performance (...). Although there was an improvement, but you can imagine (...) we looked at 3 years: the first was 22%, the 2nd year rose to 29% and the 3rd was 32%. I said no! That, to me, was very, very low. I said we have to move the headmaster

because he also did not have much time to dedicate to the school.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

A reasonable proportion of private schools (excluding those owned and affiliated to external examination bodies) are considered to be relatively low on the merit-based criteria since they are privately owned and run. Their proprietors thus have unlimited and unchecked powers in how they manage their human and financial resources.

“...funds are managed through the committee through the advice of the proprietor. And then I have seen also where the proprietor has the guts to say, among these Arabic teachers, Mr [name withheld] is going to be the head despite the fact that he is the most junior teacher in that setup. Because I have seen where teacher trainees are heading Madrassah when there are qualified teachers.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

Slight differences exist between government and grant-aided schools' promotion processes. As opposed to relying on the seniority list/database and internal promotions, vacancies in most grant-aided schools, especially Catholic Education Mission, are advertised and thus, creating equal opportunity for internal and external applicants:

“Now as regards promotion, we usually announce the vacancy just like what we have done about last week. We indicate the positions that are vacant. We send the vacancy announcements to all our schools and to at least two papers to make sure they are public.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Authors including Moser (2005) note the benefits of internal over external recruitment due to the dangers of externally sourced staff to experienced higher rates of unfulfilled psychological contracts including expectations regarding professional development including overseas training. This may be a major reason for some of its teachers moving to public schools and organisations.

For improved transparency and fairness, key stakeholder organisations, including MoBSE, regional education directorates and Gambia Teachers Union are represented in the Catholic Education Mission's promotions interview panels:

“Then a committee was set up called CPADT (Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers. In that Committee, PMO, Public Service

Commission (PSC), the Ministry, Teachers Union and a seasoned educationist who may be a retired person on a consultancy basis mainly from an outside point of view is also represented.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

“To make sure that it does not look like we are going for Christians and Catholics at the interview level, we invite a representative from the Ministry, a representative of Gambia Teachers Union (GTU), and sometimes the regional director. You will see that the Education Commission is represented and myself for the Catholic Education Secretariat. The highest score is recommended for promotion.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

In addition, lower-level staff are accorded the opportunity to appraise and contest their supervisors' performance appraisal ratings:

“I have said this to the teachers clearly, if you don't sign, then it means you don't agree. So, we will call you to defend yourself. I can give you one instance. The headmaster (...) the overall score out of 100 was 75. The headmaster recommended that the teacher be moved to another school to have more experience. The teacher looked at it, he did not sign. So, I asked him, what is the problem? It was something outside the professional area. I said I will move you instead of him. He was headmaster Class A, I made him a senior master in Class C where he would not have any decision-making as regards the teachers.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

The ability of junior staff to both appraise and contest/appeal their superiors' performance appraisal reports has helped curb their victimisation due to personal interest and differences, as demonstrated by Senior external stakeholder 5 above. This corresponds with Weber's (1964) principle of graded hierarchy and authority and the view that the governed or subordinates in a bureaucratic system should be accorded the opportunity to challenge their immediate superiors' decisions at a higher office. Additionally, deserving teachers are recommended for and given awards:

“They had to organise a panel which will go around to look at these minimum standard issues and study them in the school system for head teachers, classroom teachers and so on. Fortunately, although I was not expecting, I was able to win the overall best headteacher award.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 5)

“...sometimes, people who do very well in their schools, and they are brought to our attention by their school heads and their coordinators. Sometimes, there are people who do very well, and are chosen by their regional directors. For example, in Region 5 this year, there is one woman by the name Binta Barrow. She came out as the best classroom teacher in the whole of the region.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Adherence to the above promotion criterion: merit, including seniority, have been hampered by the non-classification of some schools:

“...from the level of the ministry, some schools are not classified. So, head teachers manning those schools, we cannot call them principal or headmaster class A, B, or C.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

The lack of or delayed promotion of long-serving staff has led to some level of dissatisfaction among teachers and education stakeholders. The following statement indicates this:

“If you look at Region 5, all the schools, I can tell you that 99% of all heads of school are all acting. And not only the heads but even at the regional level, most of the staff are acting. Like you will see a head who has been acting for almost 10 years. It’s too much and not encouraging.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

“I will not be afraid to say this. That’s the major problem of our ministry and every school in this country – performance appraisal and human resource management. I will tell you there are teachers in this field for almost 10 to 15 years and they have never been promoted.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 8)

“You know, you cannot have a teacher teaching for 20 years, 10 years, without promotion. That is not encouraging.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 11: 1)

This seemingly high level of dissatisfaction with the teacher promotion and frequent reference to more favourable public service institutions such as Gambia Police Force seems to be the main contributing factor to the relatively high attrition rate of highly qualified and experienced teaching staff:

“The Police, probably, those whom I finished school with, some of them are now officers in charge (OCs) and commissioners and I am still struggling with cluster monitor position, Grade 8.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

The problem mentioned above has been largely addressed by the recent (February 2021) mass promotion of one thousand, one hundred and twenty-eight (1,128) teachers across the country following a successful petition by the Gambia Teachers’ Union (The POINT, 2021). As noted earlier, the extrinsic motives of many teachers in particular and public sector workers, in general, is due to the relatively low pay amidst a high dependency ratio and the need and willingness of many wealthy Gambians and the employed to provide for their extended family and friends.

In a bid to help further improve education service delivery and performance, some grant-aided schools’ apex bodies such as Catholic Education Mission have, in addition to MoBSE’s cluster monitoring, implemented a separate school monitoring scheme:

“When I came there, the time of [name withheld], there was a committee that was responsible for postings. I expanded that committee to include the school coordinators. They are about five of them in the various regions plus ourselves there at the secretariat” (Senior external stakeholder 5).

Their lower span of control, frequent monitoring visits to schools, higher engagement of staff and stakeholders and improved reporting were regarded as the primary contributing factors to their higher academic performance over most government schools:

“You see, we are very close to our schools. We have representatives from the Catholic Church and our coordinators. We are very close to real situation and they understand that. So, our closeness to schools. I think, it has an impact. Also, in most of our Catholic schools, our Christians are there. Like I as a religious leader, they see you are not just a religious leader, but you are also the leader in their professional area. So, that respect for religious leaders also has some influence. So, proximity to the people has an impact.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Senior external stakeholder 5’s statement also indicates that religion, including high respect for religious leaders played a key role in improving performance in Catholic Mission schools. This is in sharp contrast with Middle-level stakeholder 6’s observation

that a significant proportion of Madrassah tend to perform poorly. This remarkable difference between these two faith-based education service providers with regard to the implementation of the merit-based system can be explained by the following:

- the Catholic Church's status as one of the oldest bureaucracies (Weber, 1964) and experience gained from managing formal organisations and providing education services across the globe, including The Gambia.
- higher prevalence of charismatic and patriarchal authority and thus particularistic tendencies among some private schools including Madrassah (Weber 1964).
- Incomplete integration of Madrassah into the conventional school system and thus their relatively lower compliance with MoBSE policies, especially regarding human resource and financial management.

The above view regarding school the reasons for and higher performance among grant-aided schools was supported by the following interview excerpts:

"You know, from my observation, most of the good results come from these grant-aided schools like Nustrat High School and St. Augustine's High School. Even at the level of the CCM, when you visit some of the senior secondary schools, it is very clear that there is a lot of difference in the results." (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

"We told him [Former President, Yahya Jammeh] Sir; the minister was trying to explain to you why it will not be possible for us to take over mission schools. We have something to show you. We said to him, you see, for the same amount of money that we are spending in these grant-aided schools, we are able to get better performance from them than the government schools and if we had our way, we will change all government schools to grant-aided schools so that we can get this kind of performance. He looked at us and said, I rest my case." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

"...if you compare those schools [grant-aided] with public schools in terms of management and discipline in the students, it is not the same. There is a difference and it all trickles down to the management." (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

Plans by Catholic Education Mission to improve the reliability of internal assessments by grouping several schools would further help to improve their schools' performance:

“Like this year, that monitoring I saw in Essau plus grouping schools and giving them a common exam. Because you will give exams according to curriculum your coverage. So, that’s what I want to introduce and see what impact it will have on the results of the students.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

In a bid to permanently address the issues surrounding promotions, rewards, and general welfare of teachers, MoBSE, in collaboration with Gambia Teachers Union, plans to set up a commission:

“Now, MoBSE is also trying, in collaboration with Gambia Teachers Union to have a teacher commission that will be entirely responsible for teacher promotion, teacher affairs like discipline and everything.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 11: 1)

While taking over the role of the Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers, the Ministry is confident that the new teacher commission will further help resolve the lingering problems affecting human resource management in the sector.

Student recruitment and promotion

Student recruitment in the nursery, lower and upper basic school levels of public and grant-aided schools is mainly based on school-going age children within their catchment areas and through entrance assessments for those transferring from other schools. While the catchment area requirement equally binds private schools (conventional and Madrassah), the high entry and performance requirements and cost of private international schools (those offering international curricula and syllabuses and programmes taught in foreign languages) often result in them attracting the brightest students from affluent backgrounds.

Entrance examinations to the junior secondary level were abolished in 2003 when The Gambia joined Education for All -Fast Track Initiative. As part of this policy shift, basic education (grade 1 – 9) was made compulsory and schools (except for international schools) were prohibited from repeating students. This move was influenced by government and MoBSE's desire to fulfil national (constitutional requirements) and global commitments (including SDG 4 on education) the rights of persons to equal

education opportunities. However, its negative effect on the quality of education led to the introduction of the National Assessment Test (NAT) at grades 3, 5 and 8. This is still less ineffective as these are not transition grades to upper basic and senior secondary school levels. Besides, a significantly lower proportion of the lowest performers are made to repeat.

“Mass promotion is something that is really affecting the sector. If you look at it, a child who underperforms in an exam or series of exams and you want that child to move to the next stage when actually he cannot cope in that area.”

(Middle-level internal stakeholder 1)

“So now, during the Common Entrance, if you are in Grade 6, you are so concerned about your promotion. You come to Form 4, you are concerned about your promotion. But now, from grade 1 to 9, you are just being pushed along and that has also affected performance.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Despite the above policy on students' promotions, school authorities and parents have occasionally implemented contravening measures to improve academic performance:

“For us, we sometimes use our discretion to ask students whose performance is not up to standard to repeat in consultation with the parents. Sometimes, the parents themselves will come and say, I want my child to repeat because the child is still young and there is more room for improvement. In fact, with that, we have seen a great improvement.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 1)

“I witnessed one of those cases in one of our schools. It is a new school. The headmaster and the parents took a very bold initiative and said look, this is a new school. The students in Grade 12 are not ready for West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC) because of lack of teachers. Curriculum coverage was not done well. They said well, ‘let’s wait until these people cover the curriculum very well’. That is [name of school withheld]. ‘Because. it is a new school, I want to say that the first results must be good to attract more students’.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

The ability of school authorities and communities to circumvent or implement policy contravening but performance-enhancing measures without attracting disciplinary action from regional education directorates of MoBSE is due to the high empowerment of school communities brought about by the implementation of participatory

approaches to managing schools. The high social capital and awareness of the importance of education among parents enabled by a robust communication and sensitisation programme by MoBSE contributed to the above. Besides, MoBSE is generally receptive to innovative and performance enhancing approaches. Hence, as part of its bi-monthly and rotational stakeholder consultative forum (Coordination Committee Meeting), it has introduced a separate forum for local actors to enable co-create ways of improving education management.

Progression to the senior secondary level is subject to passing the Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations (GABECE) – attaining the cut-off mark determined by MoBSE. However, most schools can still prescribe their own entry pass mark with priority for students who opted for the school. While some private schools tend to pursue profit as the expense of merit: *“not all private schools are good. There are private schools to me, that are in there just to make money. So, they can take anything so long as the person is ready to pay the money.”* (Senior internal stakeholder 4), most international schools strictly follow the merit-based requirement:

“Students are tested in English, Maths and French or Arabic, possibly. Now, we have introduced testing children in Science so see whether they need help because form 3 is an exams class. We are yet to fill the 4th stream and we don’t fill it anyhow. I’ve got a lot of candidates, but we are selecting the best of the candidates. After the placement test, if you are successful, we give you a place. Where you are successful, and there is no space, we put you in a waiting list. There is a long waiting list because people are hopeful that one day, they can get a space. In an international school like this, space is created any time and any day because of relocation”. (Middle-level internal stakeholder 9).

The high entry requirements and performance standards of international schools is because they are mostly owned or affiliated to international schools or examination bodies and their provision of foreign language courses such as French, Spanish and Arabic. Thus, they follow different curricula of higher demand from affluent or middle-income families including expatriates. For example, Marina International School, one of the oldest and biggest international schools in The Gambia takes the GCSE instead of the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations. Nevertheless, they are still required to abide by MoBSE’s regulations, policies and operational tools, including

the minimum performance standards in the key areas (leadership and management, community participation, curriculum management, teachers' professional development, teaching and learning resources and learner welfare and the school environment) of the School Management Manual (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2017).

Persistent underperformance especially in external assessments (National Assessment Test for Grades 3, 5 and 8); Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations for grade 9 and West African Senior School Certificate Examinations for grade 12) attracts punitive measures including closure (for private schools) and demotions or transfers (for heads of government and grant-aided schools). The following quote from an interview with a senior staff of MoBSE indicates their non-compromising approach to poor performance:

“...at a particular point, the PS was saying that there is a particular school that has not been adding any value, and the numbers are just increasing because they just want to get more money. The school is being monitored anyway, and if there is no improvement in their results, it might be closed. I think they are given an ultimatum to improve their results, or their students will be asked to move to other schools.”

The current education policy 2016 – 2030 places a great deal of emphasis on access and quality education for all and thus, promotes equity and equality in education service delivery at the basic and senior secondary school levels. This is captured succinctly in the following guiding principles of the Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030 (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2016, p.5):

- i. “Non-discriminatory and all-inclusive provision of education underlining in particular, gender equity and targeting of the poor and the disadvantaged groups;*
- ii. Respect for the rights of the individual, cultural diversity, indigenous languages and knowledge.”*

The above was echoed and confirmed by Senior internal stakeholder 4:

“Because in the policy, it is stated that you don't turn any child away because there is no space, or the child does not have a uniform. As long as the child is

willing to come to school, you must find a place even it is going to be under a tree to place him until the government can build a school.”.

4.2.1.4 Office management through the written file

Formal evidence of the presence of the office management through the written file principle includes a stipulation in the Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations (Public Service Commission, 2013, p.46) that the *“official channel of communication with any Ministry is through its Permanent Secretary, to whom all official correspondence shall be addressed. The official channel of communication between a subordinate officer and Government is through his Head of Department, and all correspondence must be channelled through him.”*

In addition, MoBSE has a computerised records and data management system. Its level of effectiveness in record keeping, data management and official/written communication is demonstrated by the existence of an active website and the relative ease at which one can get relevant and up-to-date information on the sector. Data regarding all aspects of operations are captured and analysed. Reports, including performance scorecards) generated on a regular basis (quarterly/monthly) and feedback provided. Hence, its choice over civil service organisations by the researcher for his study.

However, given the high geographical scope and decentralised nature of MoBSE, all relevant matters in regions, clusters and schools are addressed to principal education officers, cluster monitors and headteachers, respectively. Where necessary, these are forwarded to higher authority, including the Ministry/concerned persons for further action and originals/copies are kept for future reference.

“There is information sharing at a level that will make it possible for somebody to be able to provide information in the absence of whoever is responsible. I remember one of the national assembly members coming to my office and telling me, you know what surprises me? I said no. He said you guys, if I come here and ask for the PS and the PS is not around, any director that I engage on an issue I want information on, I’ll be able to get it. How is that possible?” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

“We have cluster monitors from the regional office. They go to all the schools in the region. So, when they come, they find out what is needed, what is missing, and we supply them with the information, and they take it down there.”

(Middle-level internal stakeholder 7)

As regards external stakeholders' collaboration with schools and regional offices, permission is usually first sought from the Ministry through the Permanent Secretary:

“They [partners] may have to seek clearance from the ministry and the ministry will be give us [regional education directorates and schools] permission to collaborate with them. They may not come to the region directly. There is control in that.” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)

To ensure effective formal communication within and between the Ministry and regional offices, schools and external stakeholders, MoBSE has a dedicated role known as Principal Assistant Secretary. Their role includes generating SMT meeting minutes, recommending for granting of operational license to schools and maintaining their files; working out meeting, travel logistics, transmitting policy directives to stakeholders and serving as a liaison between external stakeholders and the Ministry.

“My role and responsibilities include, writing minutes in files, especially when individuals or organisations write to apply to operate schools. Also, if there is any activity that a particular institution wants to conduct in the regions that will involve the schools under this ministry, we have to inform those regions and schools that so and so institution and individual wants to conduct so and so event and that they should provide support. We are, kind of, like the link between the ministry and the regional offices”. (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

It had also exploited existing IT and social media platforms such as WhatsApp to ease communication within and across stakeholder categories:

“...senior management has its WhatsApp group. Our own section, the PASs have their own. Notwithstanding, the regional directors and all the principals in their regions also have that group so that it makes information sharing very easy. Like if a directive comes from the ministry to the regional office, he just has to share it and the principals will get the information at the same time.”

(Senior internal stakeholder 2)

Its collaboration with media houses and launching its own TV channel has further helped to improve external communication.

“...with regard to disseminating information, we have signed an MOU with almost all the TV stations where we have our own TV programmes. And recently, we have our own TV channel.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

However, information sharing, and involvement has been a major concern among some respondents. While some of the problems are internal including having to “*push hard*” (Senior external stakeholder 5) to get information from head office and regional education directorate and the administration of some schools being a “*one-person show*” (Middle-level external stakeholder 8), others are due to national information and communication infrastructural capacity weaknesses including low IT and electricity connectivity, affordability and dependability.

“Communication is a problem. Even if you want to get a message to some of them [schools], by virtue of their location, even internet service, WhatsApp or mobile network is a problem. That’s why most of the time, we have problems communicating to schools. Our best is to get to the cluster monitors because they are living within the community, and they are mobile.” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)

As regards performance management and monitoring, this is done at four levels:

- Internal/school (department heads/senior teachers) – includes announced and unannounced classroom observation using prescribed forms to record the level of performance of teachers, including strengths and areas for improvement);
- Cluster monitoring (done periodically and includes reviewing internal/school monitoring reports);
- RED visits to schools; and
- Bimonthly CCM school visits in the host region (assess and grade schools based on the minimum standards).

5.2.1.5 *Rule and procedure-based operations*

There exist several legal, policy and operational instruments at the level of the public service and MoBSE to ensure that work and to a large extent, staff conduct, is in line with stipulated rules and procedures. These include the Public service Act, 1991;

Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013; Civil Service Procedures Manual and Financial Instructions Manual.

Public servants are required to work per the following ethical principles, values and standards:

“Demonstrate loyalty to the Government of the day and to the country; place the public interest before private interest and to ensure that private advantage does not conflict with public duty; not accept any office in any political party or join in demonstrations to publicly demonstrate support for one political party; refrain from indulging in party political activities whilst performing hi/her duties in the workplace; not unfairly discriminate against any member of the public on account of race, gender, ethnic or social origin, colour, age, disability, religion, political persuasion, conscience, belief, culture or language; avoid divulging confidential information available to them in the course of the execution of their official duties” (Public Service Commission, 2013, p.61-63)

Further to corresponding with Downs (1967) concept of statesmanship or ideal bureaucrat, the above virtues and ideals have been upheld greatly by staff of MoBSE. The following interview excerpts with a senior and middle-level staff indicate some high reliance on these management tools during decision-making both at the ministry and school levels:

“...most of the decisions we take are all guided; they are all referenced. So, that is why in the civil service, we have the Public Service Regulations, General Orders, Code of Conduct and of course on the financial side, we have the financial manual supplied by the Accountant General’s office. On our part as HR practitioners, we make use of course, mainly the Act [Public Service Act, 1991].” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

“As a principal from [date excluded] to date, I can definitely tell you that the different cultures of the nation do not disturb me much because what I hold onto is the MoBSE policy. The cap I wear is administrator and principal of the school, someone appointed by MoBSE for the entire Gambia. So, culture does not disturb me very much.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 8)

Similar and associated management instruments also exist at the level of the school. These include among others, School Management Manual, 2017 (includes Minimum Standards and PTA Constitution and School Improvement Grant management process and procedures):

“...for the school management manual, also, it was part of the effort to improve management at the level of the school.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

Further, individual schools and in many cases, streams, grades and classrooms have per the education policy and school management manual and, through their own initiative, developed and implemented policies on such as parent-student relationship, anti-discrimination, sexual harassment policies.

“We have a book called parent-student manual. It has all our policies. We are reviewing it this year because children are developing new strategies to make it up to date and to address new problems we have seen, or not captured in the previous one.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 9)

“I engage the School Management Committee (SMC) and the larger Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA) to develop rules and regulations for the school. I engage the school councillors to develop rules and regulations for themselves. I engage the teachers to develop rules and regulations for themselves. So, I implement these rules to the dot.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 8).

While the narratives of Senior external stakeholders 3 and 6 indicate some high observance of the rule and procedure-based operations and sector level policies and operational manuals, the above excerpts from interviews with Middle-level internal stakeholders 8 and 9 revealed that these are often adapted based on local, peculiar and emerging circumstances and thus, strengthens Lipsky’ (1980) and Pollitt’s (2013) observations and findings regarding the importance of discretion for street-level/front line staff and contextualisation in managing public organisations, respectively.

As regards postings, grant-aided and faith-based education service providers such as Catholic Education Mission (CEM) post teachers directly to schools. This is because they are not highly decentralised (they do not have regional education offices like MoBSE and often rely on other structures like parishes for supervision). For MoBSE,

staff/teachers are assigned to regions for onward distribution to schools by regional education directorates. CEM has recently developed specific guidelines on regional postings. Except for promotions and personal circumstances (e.g., family and health), all teachers rotate all the regions sequentially. While ensuring fairness in postings and reducing tensions and complaints, it will aid teachers personal planning:

“For example, if you have a system whereby if you are posted in Region 1, your 2nd posting will be in Region 3, your 3rd posting will be in Region 6 and then you come back to Region 2 or 4 – on rotational basis. So, if you enter and start in Region 6, you should know that in the next 3 to five years, your next posting is going to be in Region 2. So, it helps people in planning. It will ease a lot of pressure on the secretariat on postings and things like that.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

At the school level, the headteachers oversee teacher assignments to various streams/levels/classes and subjects. Thus, overall responsibility for class, stream, school, cluster, regional and national performance rest with classroom teachers, head of streams, headteachers, cluster monitors (plus school coordinator for Catholic Mission schools) regional education directors and Minister, respectively.

The high consultative nature of policy formulation both at the national, regional and school level has helped minimised law/policy-culture conflict during implementation:

“...in terms of policy, it is like the policy is developed by the involvement of all the stakeholders. So, it leads to the ownership of the policy.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

The above and some high transparency and accountability has helped reduce conflicts between schools and pressure/interest groups at the community level.

“I think what you have just asked is one of the major problems in our rural schools, interest group! interest groups! Especially when the school feeding programme was on and the coming of the School Improvement Grant (SIG). Make sure you establish the truth and go with what the policy, constitution and financial instructions and government of The Gambia says. If you do that, you have no problem.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 8)

However, adherence to these laws, policies, rules and procedures have been affected by economic (inadequate teaching staff, relatively low pay of civil servants, especially lower-level staff and location of many schools in deprived areas), cultural (beliefs, practices and norms such as castes, taboos and joking relationships) and political (interference and pressure and from the executive and interest groups including law and policy contravening executive directives, lobbying for resources by communities) factors.

For example, particularistic (Weber, 1964) and clan (communal) oriented approaches to decision-making (Ouchi, 1980; Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Goffee and Jones, 1996); are more pronounced in private schools, especially Madrassah as most of them are sole proprietorships, family and community owned. While all schools must adhere to national education laws, policies, rule and procedures, the above school categories still have significant control over their operational matters, especially HR and finance. This is because they are either not benefiting from government subvention (SIG and teacher remuneration) or fully integrated into the conventional education system. Hence the higher level of influence in decision-making by their proprietors, family members, friends and donors.

“I have also seen, where the proprietor has the guts to say, among these Arabic teachers, Mr [name withheld] is going to be the head despite the fact that he is the most junior teacher in that setup. Because I have seen where teacher trainees are heading Madrassah when there are qualified teachers.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

“Because for them, especially in the [name withheld] communities, you know, they have links like citizens abroad who always contribute money and whatever, annually, to carry out certain projects at the Madrassah. So, those who are involved in that contribution at that level, the diaspora level, their family members are always very strong in the Madrassah. So, they have a say in decision-making and whatever. So that’s how it operates.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 1)

Concerning the influence of religion on decision-making, the interview data revealed that religious principles and values tend to be the main consideration among faith-based schools, teachers and stakeholders:

“...sometimes, culture and Sharia conflict in certain aspects. When I was in [name withheld], they wanted to make me their adviser. I told them I could only be their adviser on the condition that Shariah would take precedence whenever there is a conflict between religion and culture. Although they were unwilling to accept that, they still insisted that they would make me their adviser.” (Lower-level internal stakeholder 1)

“We don’t see much difference between culture and Islamic teachings because most of our cultural beliefs are from Islam. You know, here, for Madrassah, only those who want their children to learn Islam are the ones who send their children and are the people we deal with. So, we normally don’t have any problem with them. So, they just follow our advice.” (Senior external stakeholder 6)

The above has militated against this and other principles and values of Weberian bureaucracy. These are discussed in more detail in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

4.2.1.6 Permanent (protected) employment

Except for a few cases of victimisation (dismissals and transfers) of staff by the executive during the former regime: *“You have cases at the regional level. Sometimes the head of school/Principal become very powerful. So, if they are implicated in any political activity (...) who had some difficulties with some powerful political elites. So, in some of the cases, they were dismissed. Some of them went to private schools to continue their career”* (Senior external stakeholder 3), permanent employment is one of the most highly entrenched principles of Weberian bureaucracy, formally and in practice, in the Gambian basic and secondary education sector. Except for gross misconduct and negligence, civil servants in general and teachers in particular enjoy a very high level of job security:

“I don’t think they [teachers] will complain about job security because it not easy to dismiss somebody from the civil service. You have to go through a lot of channels.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

“I think the education sector (...) very, very minimal. I think the few that were affected were isolated cases.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

High job security among teachers is partly due to inadequate qualified teaching staff – due to fewer people opting for the teaching field; the unwillingness of a good number

of them to work in remote and deprived areas; and the best leaving for higher-paying jobs in the private sector, public enterprises and NGOs. Despite the high turnover of top public officers (ministers, permanent secretaries and directors) during the former regime (1994 – 2016), MoBSE was largely spared from this problem as none of its three ministers (all female) were ever fired during the period. Instead, two resigned and picked up international appointments while the third was only made redundant due to change of regime in 2016 (presidential elections). The current minister and former regional education director, also female, has been in the position since the advent of the current regime in January 2017.

“If you look at the former regime, (...) with all the sackings of ministers, no minister has ever been sacked. Satang Jaw retired voluntarily. Anne Therese Ndong Jatta also retired voluntarily. You come to Fatou Lamin Faye, she survived her tenure until change of government in 2016. Madam Cole came in after that. The same goes for the permanent secretaries. This is because the ministry is well-grounded with systems. Whoever comes, the first reference point are the Act and the policies. They work within that. The technocrats are very much au fait with the policies. Everybody is au-fait with the policies to the extent that if a permanent secretary mistakenly goes out of context, someone will always call him to order. That’s the goodness about the environment in the ministry.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

Given the shortage of qualified teachers and its values of protecting human/employee welfare, some faith-based education apex bodies have used demotions and transfers to smaller schools and remote/deprived areas as a punitive measure instead of dismissing staff.

“Some who could not manage finances. We are not saying we demote them, but those headmasters, we send them to another school where they maintain the same status but at a lower level at a Class C school. So, the teachers assess them [headteacher and deputy headteacher] and if the reports are not very good, we can take you from a Class A school as headmaster to Class B school as Senior Master which is the same level but not at that leadership”
(Senior external stakeholder 5)

The above is consistent with Weber’s (1964) view that the level of security of staff in a bureaucratic organisation is inversely proportional to the supply and attractiveness

of their job qualification and skillset. Further evidence of this principle's presence was that most civil servants including government schoolteachers in The Gambia kept their jobs and continued to receive their full pay during its first and longest national lockdown to curb the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast, a significant proportion of private-sector employees, including private school teachers, either lost their jobs and incomes or were without pay for the entire Covid-19 lockdown period.

4.2.2 Conclusions

This section sought to examine and assess the presence and entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal-type of bureaucratic organisation, in the basic and secondary education sector of The Gambia, an African and developing country context. To achieve this, the researcher first provided an operational definition and formal and empirical evidence for the six principles of Weberian bureaucracy: official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation, graded authority and hierarchy, meritocracy, office management through the written file, rule and procedure-based operations and permanent/protected employment. The following discussion summarises the main findings from an analysis of the study data presented in subsections 4.2.1.1 to 4.2.1.6.

Regarding the principle of official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation, the study found convincing evidence of its presence, formally and empirically. Formally through such as the existence of a clear and comprehensive legal (Education Act, 1992 and Basic and Secondary Act, 2018) and policy (Education Policy 2016 – 2030) mandate, including role clarity between the MoBSE and its sister ministry (Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology) and among their various directorates and functional units. Further to each of the directorates having their policies, empirical evidence includes frequent reference to the acts as mentioned earlier, policy and Civil General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013 and operational manuals, especially School Management Manual, 2017, by research participants to support their points or justify their decisions and actions.

Data analysis also found evidence that supports the presence of the second Weberian bureaucracy's principle, graded hierarchy and authority. These include the existence of TOR for each organisational department and staff category, implementation of service-level-agreements for performance management purposes and somewhat high

adherence to official communication and decision-making channels. For example, despite being answerable to the Principal Education Officer (PEO) of their respective regional education directorates, education officers (formerly known as cluster monitors), have rarely been by-passed by their PEO's and other senior officers regarding their role of school monitoring and reporting. The recently concluded Public Service Commission's consultancy to review and update TORs for all civil service cadres and positions and grading system provides further evidence of the Gambian civil service's and by extension, MoBSE's commitment and quest to ensuring that this principle is fully observed.

Despite showing a somewhat moderate presence – the gradual shift from particularism to and seniority and competence-based recruitment, and reward practices, the study findings revealed that the observance of the Weberian bureaucracy's principle of a merit-based system has been impacted negatively by several factors, including the relatively low attractiveness of the civil service and teaching profession, inadequate qualified teaching staff and implementation of affirmative actions to address inequalities including low female representation in the teaching field. In line with the Gambian constitutional and education policy provisions and international commitments such as the Education For All Initiative, student recruitment and promotion practices at the basic level (grades 1 – 9) have tended to focus more on universal access and equity rather than merit.

The findings concerning the principle on official management through the written file indicate that this is also present. All organisational levels of MoBSE, including schools, follow this principle in their communication, information sharing and reporting to either superior or subordinate internal and external stakeholder organisations, departments and staff. For instance, school vision and mission statements and school records such as student attendance and performance statistics, school and class rules and policies regarding bullying, sexual harassment, etc., are visibly displayed in headteachers' offices and classrooms. The most visible evidence of this principle is the presence of an active, accessible and populated website. However, the study findings revealed that some of the problems negatively impacting the entrenchment of this principle are external. These include national information, communication and energy infrastructural capacity weaknesses (e.g., low IT and electricity connectivity, affordability and dependability).

The study findings indicate that the rule and procedure-based operations principle is one of the least consolidated in MoBSE primarily due to national, ethnic and clan cultural influences. While the Education Policy 2016 - 2030 and other operational instruments such as the School Management Manual 2017 have been utilised extensively to guide decision-making, cultural practices such as traditional ceremonies and caste have occasionally resulted in education staff abandoning part of these provisions to address these complex and sensitive situations and issues. Relevant examples of the above include having to allow students with traditional haircuts into school and defying the three-kilometre school location rule to build a school in a nearby community to address a caste-induced and impending conflict between two communities - to ensure that the children of the protesting community (so-called masters) have access to education services. This corresponds to Lipsky's (1980) observation and advocates that discretion in policy implementation among street-level bureaucrats, including, teachers is inherent and cannot be suppressed. Furthermore, education service providers have had to exploit cultural practices such as joking relationship between tribes and communities in their HR processes – posting headteachers who have a joking relationship with the host community to help address school performance issues, including low cooperation from parents. This finding challenges the notion that most African organisations, especially the public sector, are ineffective due to their high informality level. Clan culture and favouritism, found to be more prevalent in private schools, have also negatively impacted the implementation of this principle.

Among the most highly entrenched Weberian bureaucratic principles, permanent (protected) employment has been fuelled by clear rules and regulations regarding staff conduct, discipline and dismissal. Other contributing factors include inadequate qualified teaching staff, especially in special areas like Science, Mathematics and English Language, some high turnover of highly experienced staff and their reluctance to serve in economically deprived, especially hard-to-reach areas.

In view of the above, the presence of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE, can be regarded as moderate. This corresponds with the view that contextual factors, including political and administrative settings, have contributed to varying bureaucratic forms including hybrids (Painter and Peters, 2010; Peters, 2018; du Gay, 2005; Hoggett, 2005; Thompson and Alvesson, 2005; Newman, 2005). The concept of hybridity is further discussed and expatiated on in Section 4.4.

4.3 Drivers and Inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education Secondary

4.3.1 Introduction

Weberian bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation, has witnessed a high level of adoption globally, including in Africa. Given the significant contextual differences between the West and Africa, including The Gambia, it is necessary to investigate and unearth the factors driving Weberian bureaucracy's entrenchment and how it conditions public organisations' decision-making processes and practices. This is even more important for the education sector, the largest and one of the Gambia's economy's most critical sectors. A detailed and critical analysis of the research data using qualitative thematic analysis revealed six key interconnected third-order themes (drivers) of Weberian bureaucracy in the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of The Gambia: post-colonial legacy; politics of conditionality by international donors; organisational complexity, convenience structure of politicians and civil servants; global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices; and increasing managerial autonomy. Regarding its inhibitors, the main themes that were generated from the data are discriminatory cultural norms and practices; performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices; religion; inadequate national and organisational-administrative capacity; tolerating and accommodating school communities' culture; post-colonial legacy (indirect rule); stakeholder diversity; ideological differences in public governance; and high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency.

Subsections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 discuss the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian, respectively. Summary conclusions follow these in section 4.2.4.

4.2.2 Drivers of Weberian bureaucracy

4.2.2.1 Post-colonial legacy

The centralised nature of colonial administration (Max Weber Stiftung, 2021) – to ensure complete control and oversight and prevent, quell any opposition and rebellion from natives, and the tendency of many African public sector leaders to maintain privileges enjoyed by colonial masters has ensured that centralised and bureaucratic colonial structures and systems of operation remain virtually the same in many former

African colonies including The Gambia. The Gambian education system and MoBSE have witnessed the highest impact of colonialism because it was the first department established by the British. This includes the passing of the first education ordinance and creation of a board of education and school inspectors in 1882, the establishment of the Education Department in 1903, shift from just providing oversight to Christian missionaries to providing educational services through the establishment of Armitage High School in 1927 (Perfect, 2015), establishment of the first non-denominational school, Gambian High School in 1959, provision of grants to mission schools and articulation of the aims, scope, content and methods of education (Baldwin, 1951). The above have guided and still influence the structure, system and scope of education in The Gambia.

The significant and lingering effects of colonialism and Weberian bureaucracy are captured in the following participant interview excerpts:

“There is hardly any indigenous innovation in the education sector. It is basically a copy of what was introduced as far back as the early 1800s when the first western schools were established. Maybe the nomenclature. Like, instead of saying standard or form 1, 2, 3, etc., we now say Grade 1, 2, 3, etc. I think it is as it has been left by the Europeans after they departed in 1965.”
(Senior external stakeholder 1)

“I would say the whole fabric of our education system is colonial. There have been some changes here and there but even up to now the use of English as a medium of communication. Even the assessment methodology and grading system. Examinations are held at Grade 6 and 9 (...) at a certain level, you have to be assessed and whether you are certificated or not, it determines your progress to the next stage.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

“The civil service under colonial rule continued to be to be the same type of civil service under so-called independent structures.” (Senior external stakeholder 4)

Rather than being aligned to local education needs, the colonial education system was designed and maintained to serve the interest of the colonial masters:

“Colonial rule by nature thought that the best education for the natives was hands-on education. Agriculture, Carpentry, Joinery, etc. They were not very much eager to teach us Law, Medicine or Geography. So, that’s why in the early years, they taught Latin, Bible Studies, Joinery, Carpentry, Agricultural Science (...) things which will force you to go back to your village and earn a living but not to come to the capital, Bathurst to look for a job.” (Senior external stakeholder 1)

Post-colonial legacy perhaps played the biggest role in consolidating of the meritocracy principle through the introduction of civil service entrance and promotions examinations. Its *continuation by the Gambian government after independence* in 1965 and contribution to a lean but effective Gambian civil service had endeared it to many of its African counterparts, including Ghana. Evidence of this include conducting study tours to the Gambia by the Public Service of Ghana in the 1980s. Although abandoned over the past few decades, the importance of an efficient and effective civil service workforce has led to the revival of the civil service entrance and promotional examinations. This is formally stipulated in the Revised General Orders, Code of Conduct, Public Service Rules and Regulations, 2013 (p.8): *“To maintain high standards of efficiency and proficiency in the service, there shall be admission examinations for entry to the Civil Service. The procedure for recommending appointments and promotions are contained in the Act, Regulations and Schemes of Service. All such recommendations must take merit into account.”*

Although of less impact, the establishment and operation of boarding schools such as Armitage Senior Secondary School – the first colonial era and government school, has helped promote cross-cultural fertilisation, understanding and tolerance and the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucratic principles of graded hierarchy and authority, rule and procedure-based operations as students are moulded and exposed to daily routines guided by strict rules including respect for seniority.

“People come from different communities where they are free to move about. Their lives are not programmed like this. So, it is difficult. But by the time they stay here for two or three months, they become accustomed to this daily routine and find it difficult to leave. In the beginning, the way they are affected is negative. Some cry as a result, but at the same time they try their best to adjust.

When they finally adjust, they find it difficult to leave.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 3).

Given its historical significance as the first government school in The Gambia, many of its graduates had and still occupy key government institutions and decision-making positions, including MoBSE. This has, to some extent, promoted the entrenchment of bureaucratic principles and values in the Gambian public and education sector.

4.2.2.2 Politics of conditionality by international donors

The Gambia’s low level of development and general inadequate financial resources to address its education needs have led to high dependence on external donors:

“In this country, I can tell you that there is no school or classroom built by the government. All classrooms have been built through donor funding. What government does is pay salaries and allowances. And all these vehicles and transport you see are bought from donor funds. No vehicle has been given/donated by the government to the Ministry.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

“The most significant contributor to the education sector is donor fund. It provides the biggest support to the sector constituting 80% of capital expenditure. This is important because government funding to the education sector has been less than the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) benchmark of 4.2%.” (MoBSE, 2016)

“So, as we speak now, they [MRC Holland Foundation, a Dutch Charity] are the main sponsor of classroom construction and furniture in the education sector in The Gambia.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

This is also *“the problem with the African Union itself (...) the AU budget 2019, almost 76% of it came from outside. The same for 2016 and 2015* (Senior external stakeholder 4). Support from and trade agreements with these are not without strings and conditionalities including requirements to establish/implement bureaucratic leaning policies, structures and systems to ensure the efficient management of donor funds to increase loan repayment rates or impact of assistance (e.g. grants). Weak national weak national capacity including development policy direction were cited as key contributing factors to situation above:

“We must redefine ourselves. We must set our targets, not targets by IMF or World Bank or anybody who is giving us whatever. We must sit down and determine what we want. If we don’t do that, we will not move forward. That is fundamental. If your development is primarily dependent on outside factors, then God help you. And then that is exactly what is happening here because we cannot do (...). If you see a well, it is either a grant or a loan. From independence to date, we cannot do anything unless we take a loan or a grant. Is that true? No, there is mismanagement!” (Senior external stakeholder 4)

“I can tell you, at the beginning, to be fair to the donors, the sector was led by people who could not even tell you that this is the type of education system we want and justify it.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

The recent establishment and inauguration of the Confucius Institute at the University of The Gambia – well attended by senior government officials and Chinese diplomats, is further evidence that neo-colonialism is still alive in The Gambia and Africa. Besides, it is geared towards promoting and propagating Confucianism, a bureaucratic philosophical ideology in The Gambia and other parts of the globe and could further consolidate their bureaucratisation. Until recently (before harmonisation with conventional schools by MoBSE), the curriculum of Madrassah (Arabic/Islamic schools), was based on the country (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.) their proprietors studied in:

“When we established AMANAH [Madrassah apex body/secretariat], Madrassah were following different syllabi based on the country the proprietor graduated from. So, we have different syllabuses.” (Senior external stakeholder 6)

Some of MoBSE key donors include MRC Holland Foundation (a Dutch charity), International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, Global Partnership for Education (formerly Education for All – Fast Tract Initiative), Kuwaiti Government, Kuwaiti Fund for Economic Development (KFAED) Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP). While their differences in these donors’ funding requirements and access mechanisms, their common contribution to Weberian bureaucracy features including efficiency, professionalism, meritocracy, formality and accountability include the need

for beneficiary organisations including MoBSE to build their capacity to access, utilise, report/account for these funds to the above donors and the Gambian public.

4.2.2.3 *Organisational complexity*

An organisation with many different stakeholders relevant to its core mandate and highly decentralised is considered complex (O'Toole and Meier, 2014; Cameron and Green, 2014; Stacey, 1995). This is undoubtedly the case for MoBSE. It is the largest civil service employer in The Gambia with a staff count of more than 16,000 employees – mainly teachers), highly decentralised and dispersed with six regional education directorates, cluster monitoring structures and schools in most communities. These, coupled with its highly diverse stakeholders, including government, parents, employers, training institutions, and international organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and WFP have made the sector's management more challenging. To address these management challenges, including stakeholder diversity issues – interests and environmental instability/turbulence, Gambian education stakeholders have had to rely on bureaucratic measures to ensure efficient and effective management and overall control over the sector over the past three to four decades. Participants firmly emphasised the importance of role and goal clarity and adequate rules and procedures as they regard this as the best way to avoid chaos and improve effectiveness:

“Definitely, our reference point is the Act and Policy. What we always try to avoid is setting precedence. Unlike other ministries whose staff populations are between 60 to 100, we are dealing with over 16,000 employees. If you set a precedent, you’ve opened the floodgates.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

“...with the revisiting of functions to make sure that whilst you can have interactions between the directorates, functions were made very clear – each directorate to know that I am responsible for this, these are the personnel that are required to carry out those functions.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

“MoBSE almost constitute half of the civil service. It is a huge ministry! I remember when we started as cadet administrative officers, 50% of our staff were all MoBSE related in terms of their appointments, issue of promotion letters, longevity. It was so cumbersome and difficult.” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

A related factor driving the adoption and entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy is the need to reconcile the many diverse and often conflicting stakeholder interests in the education sector – considered the most important and utilised public service:

“I think over the years, MoBSE has become sort of the most sought after. Why? Because they are in charge of education and everybody wants their sector to be reflected in the education system. So that is my worry because everybody expects so much from them to the extent that they may be overburdened with demands and needs and obligations because every sector wants to be reflected in the education curriculum. So, I think that is what I called the great challenge that a sector like education faces. That it is everybody’s business, it will almost be impossible in the end to have everybody on board as regards the needs and range of services they will require. The last time I even heard someone saying they should introduce swimming in schools because people are dying in the sea from drowning. This is just to give you an idea of the expectations.” (Senior external stakeholder 1)

Although proved effective, the use of bureaucratic and deterministic approaches to managing issues due to complexity is somewhat at odds with some scholars’ belief that these are better managed through emergence, self-organisation, nonlinear negative and positive feedback and holism (Stacey, 1995, 1996; McMillan and Carlisle, 2007; Bovaird, 2013; Cameron and Green, 2014). A plausible explanation for the deployment of Weberian bureaucracy, especially the rule and procedure-based characteristic rather than complexity management tools such as holism, is due to the relatively high-risk avoidance (Hofstede and Bond, 1984) nature of the Gambian society.

5.2.2.4 Convenience structure of politicians and civil servants

National and organisational politics – the self-interestedness of politicians and civil servants, was found to be a major contributor to the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy. Senior external stakeholder notes that the importance of a dependable bureaucracy for political survival has led to further entrenchment of bureaucracy by the political class.

“Every politician wants a loyal civil and public service because without that, you cannot work. We have to face it. That’s why it is a myth to say that the civil service is apolitical. So, bureaucracy has to be entrenched. If a political regime comes, they have their own civil service - the one they want, trust and believe

can help them deliver their policies. Bureaucracy, therefore, has to be entrenched because every political order needs it. So, if you ask me one reason why bureaucracy has to remain the way it is? I think because of politics. Because every political order needs a dependable bureaucracy. Sometimes it is the political order which helps to entrench the bureaucracy. It has to be entrenched for the political class – executive, to be able to do anything.” (Senior external stakeholder 1).

While politicians tend to pursue self-interested goals and activities that are often not in line with bureaucratic principles, they are quite aware of the fact that their survival also depends on a strong bureaucratic system. This consideration has and continues to help further entrench bureaucratic principles in the Gambian civil service.

Given that bureaucratic decision-making is based on the law, lawmakers and implementers can exploit it to serve their interest including prohibiting things that will threaten their authority. Further to promulgating laws to ensure the above, the complex nature of legal texts and some policy documents makes them inaccessible to most citizens, especially in societies with high illiteracy rates. This coupled with inadequate civic education and sensitisation about these laws and policies that could ensure accountability to the public is another reason for the entrenchment of bureaucracy by some politicians and civil servants. The retention of most provisions of the Public Order Act, 1961 (provides discretionary power to the Inspector General of Police or other authorised persons to grant permits for protests or public processions), a colonial era law, by the previous and current governments of The Gambia supports the above motive by politicians. Alternatively, politicians and civil servants may adopt and promote post-approval governance and non-bureaucratic approaches including strategic management to reduce bureaucratic control.

Also, in their quest to provide and expand basic public services and address poverty in general and unemployment in particular, politicians in The Gambia have expanded bureaucratic institutions and processes. This has resulted in the recruitment and retention of more civil servants. This expansion and bureaucratisation of the public service is aided by and more prevalent during periods before and after elections due to the need for politicians to entice the electorate and fulfil campaign promises.

Due to the high dependence of The Gambia and MoBSE on funding for capital expenditure (MoBSE, 2016), the implementation of these projects may help further consolidated some aspects of Weberian bureaucracy through donor conditionality, such as the need for a fair and transparent procurement and regular reporting. Maintaining a bureaucratic system is equally a survival motive for ordinary civil servants as its replacement or scaling down will result in mass redundancies in the civil service and corollary institutions – as is evident from the introduction and implementation of New Public Management and related non-bureaucratic public administrative approaches (Politt and Bouckaert, 2004).

“The bureaucracy itself is a survival instinct. Civil servants are like animals. They know that any day you remove bureaucracy, they’ll go home. So, bureaucracy has to remain. So, I think it is a survival mode for the civil service. So, I think bureaucracy should be seen in that regard. It has to be entrenched for civil servants to keep their jobs - their corner in the sun if you want.” (Senior external stakeholder 1)

In line with Peters (2018) and du Gay (2000; 2005) and Dunsire’s (1979) belief that it is practically impossible to eliminate public bureaucracies in contemporary society due to their enduring characteristic and suitability of bureaucratic institutions in providing vital social services, the Gambian public sector has witnessed a significant expansion rather than size reduction. In the case of MoBSE, this was caused mainly by high investments in school expansion for increased access across the country. Given the already high decentralised nature of the sector (presence of regional education directorates), this expansion has contributed further to a more hierarchical structure and modes of operation. At the school level, the above and high concentration of staff and students has contributed to a higher span or control and overall centralisation in urban schools. This is because of the reluctance of some staff, including teachers to serve in rural areas especially remote communities.

4.2.2.5 Global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices

The need for The Gambia and, by extension the education sector to ratify and implement international regulatory regimes and practices including commitments/programmes such as the Education for All (EFA) – Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) which was geared towards helping developing countries in the achievement of the MDG goal of universal primary education through education policy reform (World

Bank, 2005) and now Sustainable Development Goals particularly Goal 4 which promotes the Weberian bureaucratic principles and values of equity and equality. The need or compulsion to adhere to international standards in education, often driven by the West, is regarded by participants as a significant contributor to the adoption of Weberian bureaucratic principles in the Gambian education sector. They further noted that the difficulty in innovating over international education standards, especially regarding content and levels of education, has affected the extent to which the education sector can adapt the national curriculum and syllabi. Relevant extracts from interview transcripts include:

“There are international standards such that you cannot innovate over them. So, I think that is one reason why there has not been much innovation.” (Senior external stakeholder 1)

“Some colonial policies are still in place. For example, school shifts of 8:00am to 1:30pm. We have tried a lot to localise the curriculum, but the content of some subject areas is universal (e.g., Mathematics, Science) (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

Despite the benefits of global standards in education, some Gambians, including civil servants, have recently been questioning and querying the need to maintain the colonial era and Christian work and academic calendar as it is not based on local realities including a dominant Muslim population. This was advanced by the former President, Yahya Jammeh and his advocates as a key reason for declaring The Gambia an Islamic republic and introducing a ten-hour four-days’ work week (Monday – Thursday, as Friday is sacred day of Worship) in 2016. Opposed by many Gambians, including Muslims, this has since been annulled by the current President, Adama Barrow, when he assumed office in January 2017 after winning the December 2016 presidential elections. As regards MoBSE, their concern is more about the non-alignment of the school calendar to local seasons:

“The school calendar is still aligned to the colonial calendar (Christmas, Easter, etc.). School breaks should be based on local seasons rather the colonial calendar. For example, taking the summer break in June (the beginning of the rainy season) will enable students to help their parents on the farms and thereby improve income generation for payment of their school fees and other needs.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

As noted by the above respondent, ensuring that school breaks especially the summer break starts before the rainy season will greatly benefit the education sector and national economy. This is because as major contributor to GDP and employment, increased agricultural productivity from additional support from students will enable their parents to finance their basic needs, including education. This is caused by the fact that most farmers still practice subsistence and rain-fed agriculture. Senior internal stakeholder 1's desire for the school calendar to be aligned with local seasons is further supported, explained and justified by the following remarks by Middle-level internal stakeholder 3:

"...during the rainy season, like in the [name of ethnic group withheld] communities where they are basically farmers, they will withdraw their children from school to help on the farm. That is usually a very difficult time".

The above views by Senior external stakeholder 1, Senior internal stakeholder 3 and Middle-level stakeholder 4 support scholars' belief that contextualisation rather than generalisation provides a more effective way of managing organisations in general and public organisations in particular (Pollitt, 2013; Painter and Peters, 2010, Politt and Bouchaert, 2011).

International agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF have been involved in the Gambian education sector after independence in 1965 by initiating and sponsoring its first and second policy development (Sleight, 1965). Since then, they have continued to promote Weberian bureaucratic values (e.g., equality) through, such as, UNESCO's declaration in 1993 that every child has the right to begin formal education in his or her mother tongue:

"The reason why UNESCO made a declaration since 1993 is the right of every child to begin formal education in the mother tongue. This is the reason. But the colonialists practice it here in The Gambia because the first language I learned for 2 years to the exclusion of English is my language. I went to a school where Mandinka was taught for 2 years but it closed down because of (...) I learnt nothing but Mandinka (...) Mathematics, everything was in Mandinka." (Senior external stakeholder 4).

Further to being a fundamental human right, the push for universal access to basic education across the globe owing to the relatively high level of illiteracy in developing countries and the need for a well-educated human resource for sustainable national

development, has led to further entrenchment of Weberian bureaucratic values of equity and equality in the education sector of The Gambia. This is clearly spelt out in the following sub-sections of the Education Policy 2016 – 2030:

“1.1.2: The document outlines the aims and objectives of education in this country which are synchronised with the education-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

“1.1.3: Education for All (EFA) goals, the Global Partnership for education-related goals and the country’s post Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) goals. Policy priorities are identified to allow for the growth of educational opportunity and improve the effectiveness of education at all levels, from early childhood development (ECD) to tertiary and higher education.”

The following interview excerpt confirms the existence, implementation and commitment to the realisation of the above goals and ideals:

“Because in the policy, it is stated that you don’t turn any child away because there is no space, or the child does not have a uniform. As long as the child is willing to come to school, you must find a place even it is going to be under a tree to place him until such time that government can build a school. So, with that in mind, we are ready to go to any level to make sure that children are kept in school. It is not the building but the presence of the kids in that particular location that makes the school.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

4.2.2.6 Increasing managerial autonomy

Most participants have recognised poor governance as a key factor militating against economic development in The Gambia. Key governance issues in the Gambian civil service include weak political and civil service leadership, corruption and low accountability. Senior internal stakeholder noted that *“decision-making was a bit challenging during the 2nd Republic because of the tendency to issue directives to the extent that in some sectors they would not take decisions but would pass them on to (...) let’s say Office of the President with written requests such as ‘Forwarded for your attention and further directive’”*. This coupled with the frequent dismissal of top senior government officials – ministers, permanent secretaries and directors had impacted negatively on the performance of the public service in general, and the most affected

similar sized and organised organisations like the ministries of health, agriculture and local governance in particular. MoBSE had to devise measures to prevent and reduce executive, donor and interest groups interference. While this involves introducing policy changes at key temporal periods, including immediately before and after elections, to increase political support, its main and most effective tool was improving information management capacity for informed decisions and strict adherence to sector and national regulations and policies when dealing with stakeholders. Concerning the benefits from its improved data and information management capacity, this has ensured the availability of relevant information to key stakeholders and increased understanding and appreciation of issues concerning the sector:

“For the President [Yahya, Jammeh], I don’t know but I can tell you some of the things we used to do perhaps that have actually helped. Like this example of information sharing and making sure that it is available when it is needed. At the level of the governor, when the governor needs information, he does not have to call PS, the director [education] is there.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

“National assembly members, especially the selected committee on education, are usually consulted so that they are better informed, and this has yielded improved relations with MoBSE.” (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

Besides promoting informed and rational decision-making (March, 1994; Bratton, et al., 2020; Weber, 1964) for the sector and its stakeholders, information availability and sharing has earned the sector much respect from key stakeholders, including politicians and donors:

“When the President goes on tour, Education [MoBSE] was the only sector where the minister will go with a dataset. Anything that he wants to know about that community, the school, the minister will be in position to provide it. In fact, he used to make that remark.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

I remember one of the national assembly members coming to my office and telling me, you know what surprises me? I said no. He said you guys, if I come here and ask for the PS and the PS is not around, any director that I engage on an issue I want information on, I’ll be able to get it. How is that possible?” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

Adherence to national and sector laws, regulations, policies and rules and procedures in general and data-driven and informed decision making has proven to be an effective strategy in curbing political and donor interference and dominance in MoBSE:

“During the President’s ‘Meet the People’s Tour’, communities would want to use politics to request for a school. The Minister would intervene by providing the statistics and the President will have nothing to say” (Senior stakeholder 4)

“Our relationship with donors is such that the donor element is downplayed to a level that it doesn’t influence decisions that much because we do our research together and we share our findings with them. So, all our drive has been informed by facts rather than intuition or something else. There is hardly any instance where donors will tell us that they have money, but it has to be spent in a particular way.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

The above narratives by senior and long-serving staff of MoBSE demonstrates some high utilisation of the rational choice model of decision-making. March (1994) notes that adequate information ensures an improved evaluation of alternatives and selection of the best decision. However, these respondents’ perspectives seem to downplay the vital role intuition can play in strategic decision-making (Bratton et al., 2020), especially in start-ups, SMEs (Mintzberg, et al., 1998), social enterprises, NGOs and novel human services settings (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Overall, the evidence above indicates that MoBSE quest to increase their managerial autonomy to overcome challenges due to their central-level public service organisation status was and continues to be a key driver of Weberian bureaucracy particularly the rule and procedure-based operations and formal communication through the written file principles.

4.2.3 Inhibitors of Weberian Bureaucracy

The main themes that emerged from data analysis are discriminatory cultural norms and practices; performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices; tolerating and accommodating school communities’ culture; religion; Inadequate national and organisational-administrative capacity; post-colonial legacy; stakeholder diversity; ideological differences in public governance; and high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency.

4.2.3.1 *Discriminatory cultural norms and practices*

This is the first and main factor militating against Weberian bureaucracy's entrenchment in MoBSE. Key sub-cultural dimensions include castes, sexism and particularism (favouritism).

Castes

Although gradually dying out, the lingering caste system among some tribes and communities in The Gambia has negatively impacted Weberian bureaucratic procedure and rule-based principle, and equality and equity values.

"Where that caste system was coming into play was to do with the children of the so-called masters sitting in the same class with the children of what they call their servants. It happened in Konteh Kunda Suukoto and Niggi." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

"MoBSE has an inclusive policy – no child should be left behind. However, enrolment is normally affected in some communities and areas such as the Upper River Region due to the caste system's existence. Most parents from the noble or commoner social classes in such communities take their children to distant schools because they don't want them to attend the same school or sit in the same class with those from the lower social strata." (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

"Even me, when I was a child, my parents used to tell me, you are going to these blacksmiths, don't sit on their beds. And when they come to you, don't allow them to sit on your bed. If they sit on your bed, take that bed sheet, and give to them to take home. That's how I was socialising. But, I know it is the same thing that must have influenced that boy." (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

On several occasions, education authorities had to deviate from established education sector policies and rules to address school access issues stemming from the existence and practice of a caste system in some communities. A case in point includes the need for the Ministry to break away from its school location policy - dictated by the size of the community, number of children and how central a community is vis-a-vis other communities while maintaining at least three kilometres between schools (various levels) where possible, to constructing two primary schools in two neighbouring villages.

“The way we dealt with it was, the Suukoto school was already there and we opened a school at Niggi where the servants were and the school at Suukoto continued to serve the children of the so-called masters” Because our policy is to get the kids educated. If some cultural issue is going to result to some kids being left out, then we need to create some extra space for them.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

“we try as much as possible, not to interfere with those cultural issues. We always come up with a solution that would respect those cultural values.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

While this intervention may have helped address Weberian bureaucratic values of equity and equality, it contravened and negatively impacted the rule and procedure-based operations principle of Weberian bureaucracy.

However, increased awareness among the public and engagement of affected communities and persons by MoBSE and other national and local stakeholders (refer to *Joking relationship between tribes and communities*’ sub-theme) has contributed significantly to addressing this cultural practice:

“We just invited the two kids who were involved, and their parents and we counselled them. We talked to them and after the counselling, I always make a follow up. Because, we told that once we are human beings, we are all equal.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

“I can remember fully what happened to me during my socialisation. So, I was able to handle the situation. I told them no, that’s just a concept. Because I have been I have sitting with blacksmiths in school, I have been lying in the same bed with them and then I even cited an example by telling him that there was one time a director here by the name [name withheld], the ‘Alkalo’ [village head] of [name withheld], married [name withheld] and [name withheld] is a blacksmith. So, I was able to use my director at the time as an example. I said nothing happened to the director and he is the director and he has a very nice vehicle.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

The persistence of the castes and its negative effects is also partly due to the continued glorification of higher caste members, especially nobles and warriors by

some segments of the Gambian society, including griots (oral historians and traditional praise singers) and reluctance and unwillingness of some lower caste members to challenge it. The impact of the above interventions by the sector demonstrates the importance of equal opportunities (Weber, 1964).

Sexism

Discrimination against women in most African and Gambian life spheres, including getting an education, has contributed to some significant levels of inequality between men and women in employment and decision-making positions in the civil service and the education sector. This phenomenon has been fuelled to a great extent by traditional norms and taboos regarding women's role and position in the Gambian society - fewer women went to school because it was strongly believed that their role was in the home rather than the workplace:

"I think one of them is sexism which has delayed the women folk from getting education although it has improved right now. Because, that was a big cultural barrier. Taking girls to school was a taboo." (Senior external stakeholder 1)

"Some communities are conservative to the extent that the recruitment drive for girls was a problem. Some communities would not send their female children to school." (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

"Because during that time [colonial era], people upcountry do not send their girl child to school. They thought the girl child was meant for the husband and kitchen." (Senior external stakeholder 7)

Negative effects of gender socialisation and patriarchy in the Gambia include the lingering practice of early marriage and consequently teenage pregnancy among members of some ethnic groups despite the legal age of marriage being raised to 18 years in 2016 and the existence of strong legal measures against perpetrators. Reasons for this include the fact that most marriages are not registered, and parents fear that their daughters may bring shame to the family by getting pregnant out of wedlock and (or) the biological father denying the child. Furthermore, affected persons and relatives tend to shy away from reporting such cases to law enforcement because of a deep culture of silence and fear of victimisation including being cursed or ostracised by their family.

The reverse is the case among some tribes and communities rural Gambia. For example, *“there is a certain part of the community that is not interested in their boys going to school. They prefer sending them to the local Madrassah, ‘Dara’. But for their girls, they prefer them to go to school. When I talk to them, they tend to say, actually, the boys should be coming back to handle family things”*. (Middle-level internal stakeholder 4). This negatively impacts the male’s future employment and socioeconomic development prospects. While female enrolment has now overtaken male enrolment at the Lower basic (primary) level and gender parity has been registered at the upper basic (junior secondary) level, male enrolment and completion rates are still significantly higher at the senior secondary and tertiary levels (MoBSE, 2019).

Another form of discrimination based on gender is reluctance or refusal of some communities or property owners to host or rent accommodation to male teachers. This can be a serious problem because most MoBSE staff, including teachers posted outside their native communities, live in rented accommodation due to the absence of teachers' quarters in many school communities. This issue first came up while the researcher attended Coordination Committee Meeting – a bimonthly and rotational policy assessment forum in Region 4 (North Bank), Farafenni. MoBSE stakeholders agreed and are concerned that this has affected teacher availability and education service delivery in the concerned communities (Researcher Observation).

The following interview excerpts of Senior internal stakeholder 4 corroborate and further and explains the above observation:

“Normally, it is Region 6 where you have (...) sorry to call the tribe, [name withheld]. You know they are not very accommodating to male teachers. They tend to jealously guard their wives - they don’t trust outsiders staying close to their women and as such, they are not very accommodating when it comes to those kinds of things. So, we used to have those challenges. In fact, there was an instance where a new school was built in Region 6 and the teachers posted there were not able to get accommodation. The regional director had to call the village head to say if you don’t give my teachers accommodation, I will close your school and withdraw the teachers. That was when some form of accommodation was arranged for them.”

The above analysis indicates that cultural norms including taboos, patriarchy and gender socialisation (Bratton et al., 2020) are key drivers to sexism in the Gambian society. This issue and general problem of absence of staff quarters in some school communities, is being gradually addressed through incorporating this in new school construction projects by government and MRC Holland Foundation, the biggest funder of school infrastructure and furniture and through community self-help projects. Additionally, these initiatives are helping to address staff shortage issue in remote areas due to lack of basic amenities.

Particularism

First coined by Max Weber (1964) but now referred to as favouritism, the main sub-themes of particularism in The Gambia are nepotism and tribalism. Although nepotism was an issue in the past: *“In the past, we had instances of when somebody would say, boy this is my brother. I understand that you are promoting, and I want you to include him in those to be promoted”* (Senior external stakeholder 2) and still exists in the civil service, especially for lower-level positions, this phenomenon has now been addressed to a great extent by through the implementation of HR systems and processes such as seniority list/database and performance management system.

“We had to set up our database that would contain all the relevant information about teachers, their years of recruitment, when they were confirmed, how many times did they received promotion. So that’s what we were using. If we have any adverse report from the performance management system (PMS) on any teacher within the category to be considered, he is out.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

This system was able to help us deal with that [favouritism] because if you tell me that [to render favour to friends’ relatives], I would turn round and tell you that those we are considering are in these categories and your person/brother is not, they go away and appreciate the response they get.” (Senior external stakeholder 2]

“The good thing about the seniority list is that it captures your first day and year you started work with the Ministry. Notwithstanding, that does not automatically qualify you for certain promotion because it is not only seniority that qualifies

you for promotion. You also need to develop yourself over time.”. (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

However, favouritism is still a great concern among some education service providers, especially private schools including Madrassah, as decision-making – particularly HR management; in these institutions are still primarily dominated by proprietors, family members, friends and donors. Thus, the level of observance of Weberian bureaucratic principles in most of these institutions is generally weak.

Low financial support from the government and harmonisation/integration of the Madrassah curriculum and syllabus with conventional schools were considered as negatively impacting the ability of Madrassah to adhere to Weberian bureaucracy:

“Maybe if they’re handle like government and if it is the government that is paying them and doing everything, then you can impose on them to come up with SMC and that they should be selected or elected from different wards or different areas so that they will be managing the day-to-day running of the school. Otherwise, it is those who put in their resources that are influential.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 1)

“We also use certain rules to judge the madrassah. It not fair. At a certain stage, the CCM realised that. You cannot use the same minimum standards for conventional schools and apply them to the madrassas. No, it was not fitting. They always had very low marks. So, we have to look at that setting. The system has to consider that they are a different breed rather than treat them as conventional schools. Like football and basketball are all games but you cannot use the rules of football to govern basketball.” (Senior external stakeholder 5).

Nevertheless, on-going reforms especially in HR management by AMANAH, Madrassah apex body and ongoing programmes to fully integrate these into the conventional education system by MoBSE will significantly help address the issues highlighted above.

4.2.3.2: Performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices

Joking relationships

Found across the globe, in Africa and indeed The Gambia, joking relationships – also referred to as ‘joking ties’ and ‘joking affinities’ exist between ethnic groups, clans,

kinfolk, communities and even countries. They include taboos, mutual behavioural conventions, and obligations, and stereotyping by patrilineage, origin and ethnicity (Davidheiser, 2006). They exist among most ethnic groups and between many communities in the Gambia and are constantly being created and modified. While mostly used for fun and to render favours, they are also employed in conflict management.

The importance of joking relationships is because Gambians and most Africans conceptualise and approach conflict management in a remarkably different way from the West. Rather than relying on formal conflict management structures like courts, Gambians prefer and utilise social connections including joking relationships to settle disputes. Dr Ebrima Lowe, former Chief Executive Secretary of Alternate Dispute Resolution Secretariat (ADRS) noted that the Gambian “*court system has been structured and designed to settle disputes through adjudication processes designed and developed in cultural settings completely to our African ways of justice delivery system*”. Hence, the establishment of ADRS by the Gambian Ministry of Justice in 2013, its decentralisation and high effectiveness due to the high entrenchment of informal dispute resolution practices. Parties with a joking relationship can exploit it to discuss issues frankly without attracting anger or confrontation. In The Gambia, there are varying levels of obligations between joking parties. For example, within the Mandinka ethnic group, people with ‘*Dangkuto*’ relationships have stronger mutual obligations and intentional disregard of these is believed to have grave spiritual consequences and thus its high adherence by joking parties (Davidheiser, 2006).

Disregard or non-exploitation of these joking relationships in public organisations including schools, especially in the rural and provincial areas, where these practices are still widely and highly observed could affect the level of effectiveness of public organisations. Despite having and implementing a merit-based HR system, there were a few occasions where education personnel, especially headteachers, were posted to certain communities based on a joking relationship between their tribe or community and the host community. Exploitation of the joking relationship card by education authorities and staff has contributed to increased cooperation and performance in some schools.

“...if I can cite one example like Kanilai. The headmaster there is a Serer. So, he took that relationship card between Serers and Jolas. So, he is well accepted in that society. Because all the time, he will tell them that I am your king and they will say no, you are our slave or things like that. So, that man is really accepted, and I think that has really raised the level of cooperation from the parents and that school did very well this academic year.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

The high effectiveness of the Serer-Jola (fourth and fifth largest ethnic groups in The Gambia, respectively) joking ties is caused by the belief that the two ethnic groups share a common ancestry:

“The dangkuto [strong mutual obligations] between Jola and Serer with an account of a time when their progenitors were traveling in a boat and a storm caused the vessel to split. One passenger floated away with part of the boat and landed in a forest, thereby founding the Jola ethnic group. The other passenger drifted with the rest of the vessel toward a riverine delta and evolved into the Serer ethnic group.” (Davidheiser, 2006, p.838 - 839).

Hence, hurting and the unwillingness of parties to grant favours to each is frowned upon or highly disapproved. While the academic literature features many theories and studies on joking relations, these are based mainly on peacebuilding and conflict management (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, Gundelach, 2000; Smith, 2004; Davidheiser, 2005; Garde, 2008; Rigby, 2012; Sogoba, 2018; Lamle, 2019), work relations in a large Swedish company (Nelson, 2014) and six district councils in Northern Ireland (Brown and Worthington, 2010), public relations and business strategy in the Gambian society (Badjie and Nugrahanti, 2021), resistance and contestation of power through booing of Spanish leaders and national anthem during football games by Catalonians (Vaczi, 2018), masculinity and homosocial conformance among teenage male students in three lower secondary schools in Sweden (Odenbring and Johnasson, 2020), identity construction and power contestation among Japanese female inn workers (Yoshida, 2001) rather on stakeholder management in a public organisation or school setting. Furthermore, they contradict the widely held belief that the high level of underdevelopment and ineffectiveness of most African public organisations are ineffective due to their high informality (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

A related strategy includes posting teachers to their native communities to help address low community cooperation and student academic performance:

“Another example I can give is Kartong. We have had different headmasters, but they were a bit careful because my people are difficult. So, we had to send one of us. So, he had to tell them I am from here, I am not going to look at your mother or father’s face. I am like your mother and father in this school. So, they are a bit not sure. So, they are serious with their studies. They have also increased the hours of studies.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

While this is partly due to their knowledge of the local context and acceptance by fellow natives, social ethics is also a key motive. As in many countries in Africa and other parts of the globe, the community and society are regarded as a larger family and thus demand that people treat other people like their family members. Therefore, Senior external stakeholder 5’s use of the phrase *“I am like your mother and father in this school”* is based on the expectation that students will accord him the same respect they give to their parents or older siblings. It also means as their parent in school, he would also assume the disciplinary role of their parents.

Another informal practice that has helped address the inadequate qualified teacher issue in provincial, hard-to-reach, deprived or politically charged or stigmatised communities is the relative high level of social capital among educator stakeholders and Gambians. This takes many forms at the community level including self-help initiatives to construct staff quarters for teachers. Notable among these is natives volunteering to teach in their communities:

“Now there are other factors that have influenced the performance especially in Kanilai. The last two, three years when Kanilai has political stigma. I said ah it is the president’s [former President, Yahya Jammeh] home and things like that. Nobody likes to associate with the place. Postings (...) some people even came and said they are not going back there. But the children, the natives of the place (...) some of them came up and said we want to go back. There was even one with a degree. He said I want to go back and help in my village. I said you can go back but I can only give you a HTC salary. He said I don’t mind. And so, the cultural and the natives going back to the place has really influenced the performance. Maybe it is not common, but that example is good because

the people gradually have attained 96% pass in the basic education exams.”

(Senior external stakeholder 5)

Other stakeholders have exploited joking at the national and local levels to address the caste system induced problems. While a peace building endeavour at the national and community level, it has contributed significantly to addressing the caste system's negative impact on education service delivery. A typical example of such mediation efforts includes a conflict resolution mission by religious, community and opinion leaders of Upper Baddibu (North Bank Region) and national icons, including Jaliba Kuyateh (most popular Gambian musician) to Garowol in Kantora district (Upper River Region) to resolve forty-two caste-related disputes (Jadama, 2020). During the mediation meeting, various speakers of the visiting team expressed their disappointment and resentment with the practice (*ibid*). They invoked religious teachings regarding the equality all human beings to dissuade the host community from holding on to or invoking such tradition at naming ceremonies, burials and other events. (*ibid*). Through this and similar interventions by human rights stakeholders such the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), The Gambia, the negative impact of caste-system and related problems such as low student enrolment – due to the reluctance of higher caste members to send their children to the same schools with the lower castes, and underutilisation of existing school facilities or education authorities having to establish additional schools in affected areas/communities to ensure access for all children, will continue to decline and hopefully be eradicated in the not too distant future. This frank discussion between the mediating team and affected community would not have been very difficult, if not impossible, without the existence of a joking relationship between the two communities.

4.2.3.3 Tolerating and accommodating school communities' culture

Public sector organisations worldwide operate in different contexts/settings (Painter and Peters, 2010; Politt and Bouckaert, 2011; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). These contextual differences including national and organisational culture be adequately understood and properly managed for increased effectiveness. This is even more important when applying foreign originated concepts to recipient contexts/organisations. The above views are echoed and buttressed by the following interview excerpt:

“Even in the education sector, the cultural context (...), how do we frame our curriculum around our cultural context? The teachers we are training, what is the cultural knowledge in them to be able to inspire the children? be role models? because they are bound by the cultural context. They are ashamed of doing certain things because of our culture. So, the cultural context is everything.” (Senior external stakeholder 1).

“Just to link all these discussions to the issue of context (...) you have all these theories in management, in whatever field, but you cannot apply them lump sum. You have to be aware of the context. Otherwise, you’ll fail woefully. What is applicable in some parts of the world cannot be applicable in some situations. I think the practitioner needs to be well au-fait with the context to be successful.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

Due to the importance of effective culture management, the sector and indeed school authorities have had to allow students to participate in important traditional ceremonies, rituals and carry cultural symbols (e.g., hairstyles) in school even when against education and school policies (attendance, dress code, etc.):

“...here, you know you have different ethnic groups and each of them have their own norms. So, you have to understand them in order to be with them. You have to accept some of their culture. Like, some children that come to school with a type of haircut, they have just come fresh from circumcision. You have to accept them like that for the period. Because they will tell you, this is our culture. I give circumcision as an example in some communities and schools am operating. Like in the Mandinka culture, when they have circumcision, you can see it from their hairstyle. But it is just for a time. The school has to understand them, accept it until the end of that short period when they child will remove that hairstyle.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 1)

“...we have 15 to 20 nationalities here. From Africa, Asia, Europe and America. We are culture tolerant. The evidence is every year, we have a culture day. Parents from different nationalities are involved in the preparations.” (Middle-level Internal stakeholder 9)

For increased acceptance and cooperation from community members, education staff, especially key front-line workers like head teachers and cluster monitors, must

integrate into the local community by speaking their language and imitating some of their cultural aspects. This is more pronounced in Wolof communities and in the Central River Region, which has the highest proliferation of informal Islamic schools locally called 'Dara'.

“So probably the challenges that I faced with in the Wolof community was they are completely different with the Fula and Mandinka community setup. Because for them, you have to integrate, you have to come to their level in order to be able to encourage them to send their children to school. Otherwise, they believe in the Islamic ('Dara') education and other things. But the moment you are involved with them, you are down to earth, you try to imitate some of their cultural aspects, then you can always win their hearts and minds.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

For others, more significance and attention are placed on adherence to the community's norms and taboos, including dressing modestly. Violations could result to expulsion from the community:

“I remember a community where a headteacher came dressed in shorts and the community insisted that he is moved. That was a long time ago. They said he must move because it is not acceptable for an elderly person to go out in shorts. They see that as immoral. It was their belief that they [teachers] are there to teach and impart morality to the students rather than encouraging immorality.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

“I was staying in a compound where they will tell you that you should not wash and dry your clothes in the evening. It brings them bad luck. I also taught in a community where they will tell you when to cook. If you exceed that time, they will come for you.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 10:2)

While the Ministry usually intervenes to address such and related issues, it is sometimes forced to transfer the concerned staff members for their own safety:

“If there is that grievance between them some of which could be social or economic. It depends. We have to look at things from the two parties. If it goes further, we also look at the safety of the principal because they own the community. So, the big office intervenes when it is beyond us. That is the time

the office is involved and they make their final say. But, in many cases, the principal moves because it is their community and they have their grievances, whether hidden.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 1)

Further, the high empowerment of communities in the management of schools, including their high representation in school management committees, has increased their power base and contributed to the situation mentioned above.

4.2.3.4 Religion

Religion is still used in The Gambia and other parts of the world by leaders and followers to justify decisions. Thus, disobedience or disrespect to those in authority is regarded as disobedience to God even when they are wrong. This has negatively impacted the entrenchment of some aspects of Weberian bureaucracy, including meritocracy. As regards the impact of religion on the Gambian education sector, the first public department to be established by the colonial masters and to experience a bureaucratic administrative system was the reluctance of the majority Gambian Muslim community to embrace western education and its associated administrative systems due to the dominance of the school system by Christian missionaries:

“For a very long time, Muslims were not going to school. Why? Because it was the Christians that were running the schools. That is why until the 1970s, those working in government institutions were either Christian, Creole or Catholic/Gourmet. Of course, that has changed over the years because of this duality –That has also encouraged Muslims to start sending their kids to schools.” (Senior external stakeholder 1).

Although this started to change in the 1970s with the introduction of Islamic education in the western school system, some are still reluctant to embrace western education as the latter is regarded as incompatible with Gambian culture and Islam:

“I witnessed a scenario where we were asked to go to the village to sensitise the parents to send their children to school. But unfortunately for us, when we went to a ward, a family setup, that’s the Imam’s family. Then we told them that we were sent by the head to talk to you about sending their school going age kids to school. The response we got was, we have been telling you people, if you are not careful, we’ll close this school! We don’t want this western education. Our culture doesn’t want this western education.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 10:1)

“We have very few cases now except where the cultural belief is (...) some of them feel that their kids should not go for western/formal education but for Madrassah. This has been proven by research in Region 5 North where the out-of-school kids are more concentrated to the extent that the Ministry has to come up with a project to target those people.” (Senior internal stakeholder 2)

Hence, decision-making in religious schools, especially Madrassah, and among staff, tend to be driven by religious rather than bureaucratic principles.

4.2.3.5 Post-colonial legacy (indirect rule)

The lingering effects of colonialism in Africa countries continues to be a hot debate in academic and political discourse. While the official language of African states and other former European colonies is perhaps its most conspicuous effect, colonialism has equally influenced their public administrative systems. However, the technocratic/managerial rather than analytical and explanatory approach to researching public sector reforms in Africa has resulted in an inadequate understanding and appreciation of the role of colonialism in shaping the current state of affairs in the management of African public organisations (Hyden, 2010).

Despite being a significant driver of Weberian bureaucracy in the Gambian civil service and education sector, colonialism has equally promoted the preservation of traditional and non-bureaucratic administrative systems through the British indirect rule system. Traditional and local administrative structures and systems – influenced by the Gambian and West African culture, were relied upon to govern the protectorate - all parts of The Gambia except the colony (Banjul and Georgetown). These traditional and often informal administrative processes and practices have been further entrenched in the local governance system and structures of The Gambia during the second republic (1994 – 2016) through such as the introduction of the Paramount Chief position. Furthermore, the 1997 Constitution and Draft Constitution 2020 of the Gambia recognise traditional lines of inheritance in village heads' appointment. While corresponding with Weber's (1964) traditional (patriarchal) authority, they have militated against Weberian bureaucracy's entrenchment in general and meritocracy principle in particular.

The above findings regarding the role of post-colonial legacy in hindering the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE coincide with Hyden's (2010) view

that the use of indirect rule by the British, including the promotion of the natives' interest, implementation of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in the 1930s and use of the political class (District Commissioners and Officers), as opposed to the French, Portuguese and Belgian system of direct rule, played a major role in the reinforcement and perpetuation of the traditional African system of governance and values.

4.2.3.6 *Inadequate organisational-administrative capacity*

Both internal and external stakeholders have identified inadequate organisational capacity including the following factors as a key inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy:

- Weak education policy direction and negotiation strategy in the past: *"I can tell you, at the beginning, to be fair to the donors, the sector was led by people who could not even tell you that this is the type of education system we want and justify it"* (Senior external stakeholder 2).
- Inadequate teaching staff size and capacity: *"we are faced with qualified teachers' issues. You go to some schools; they are now recruiting from homes straight to the classroom which is not good"* (Middle-level external stakeholder 1). *"Some definitely need to be upgraded in terms of capacity building so that they would be able to handle the school."* (Middle-level internal stakeholder 12);
- Inadequate budgetary support from central government: *"The challenges are the government does not have enough resources. Some of our challenges: we still have some of our teachers that we send to Gambia College and cannot appoint them because of the limited resources. For the past two years, we have been suffering from that financial problem because the change of government has caused a lot in terms of the subventions that we used to receive from the Ministry. So, these are some of the problems. Also, we need more capacity building for Madrassah sector because we lack that capacity in many aspects."* (Senior external stakeholder 6).

While refuting the notion that neo-colonialism and external donors have played a key role in the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy, the following interview excerpt with a senior external stakeholder of MoBSE further supports the statements above regarding institutional and national capacity:

“I am one person that does not believe very much in this argument that donors (...) the colonial era has passed. You cannot hide behind colonialism to say that our education system cannot be focus in such a way that will address our national needs. Look! That was how we introduce Madrassa education. That was how we introduced some of these things which at the beginning someone would say it is unthinkable. Like in the rural areas, these hardship allowances to attract teachers in the most difficult parts. These were all introduced through donor funding and Girls Scholarship Trust Fund. When we realised that girls were not going to school in the rural areas, we started with Regions 5 and 6. We used the HPIC funds to do 4 and 3, Yahya Jammeh [former president] came with President Empowerment Girls Education Project (PEGEP) to deal with 1 and 2. Which donor would tell you that you should not prioritise girls’ education?” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

Weak national and education sector support infrastructure, including electricity and telecommunications network, was cited as having a significant negative impact on education policy delivery:

“...electricity is also a challenge in most schools. Although now, some of the schools that MRC Holland are building have been solarised. They build quarters for teachers. Putting solar there helps. It’s a way of motivating those teachers to have some comfort and have the privilege of having those electrical appliances, but there are still a lot of schools that don’t have electricity. Those are the challenges we face, especially at the regional level. Not all mobile companies have network in those areas.” (Senior internal stakeholder 4)

“Communication is a problem. Even if you want to get a message to some of them, by virtue of their location, even internet service, WhatsApp or mobile network is a problem. So, communication is our number one challenge for our headteachers on the ground. Network coverage is not nationwide, internet coverage is for the few. So, that becomes more of a problem. It’s very difficult. That’s why most of the time, even we have problems communicating to schools, our best is to get to the cluster monitors because they are living within the community, and they are mobile.” (Senior internal stakeholder 3)

4.2.3.7 Stakeholders' diversity

The high diversity of education stakeholders based on such as ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, contextual differences across regions, clusters, schools, school levels (primary, middle and high) and school types (government, grant-aided and private) has meant that some discretion - flexibility and informality is incorporated in operationalising sector policies by street-level bureaucrats such as regional directors, cluster monitors and headteachers. Typical examples of the importance of context specificity include the revision of the initial and general school management manual for all school categories to tailor-made manuals for each of the school levels to ensure the reliability of its monitoring and performance assessment system; and conducting separate PTA meetings for the various streams in a private multilingual international school to ensure focus on issues relevant to each stream.

The generally low remuneration package of teachers and lower-level staff and the need to balance competence against trust and economic realities in hiring staff for certain positions has meant that bureaucratic principles in general and organisational policies and procedures are occasionally not strictly adhered to:

“For example, the appointment of cooks. That is important. Some of those are given to you to bring in people you trust. Cooks, orderlies, people who will look after the household. You can't just give that one to anybody, isn't it? Some of those things we need to understand. Sometimes, it is better to recruit them from the region. If you appoint a person from Banjul and post them to Basse, you know he cannot survive given the low salary. People are identified in the regions to serve as secretaries and record clerks – these are grade 3 positions so that they will stay with their families and at the same time be going to work. So that one, you have to take into consideration the region.” (External senior stakeholder 3)

At the school level, these policy contravening include initiatives towards addressing low academic performance:

“There are certain things that are against policy at the ministry level, but parents would take it upon themselves sometimes to come up with their own policies and the Ministry accepts it even if it against the policy of the Ministry. For example, the Ministry says and there is no levying in schools. But parents would say we want our students to have extra classes. So, we are going to be

responsible, we are going to charge ourselves to give Cola nuts (token) to the teachers to do that. Then the administration would have a meeting with the teachers to convince them to do these extra classes and parents would be involved in the collection and the payment of teachers.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 3)

4.2.3.8 Ideological differences in public governance

This is perhaps one of the main causes of the moderate-to-low consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in The Gambian public sector and by extension, MoBSE. There are huge differences regarding how Gambians and many African societies conceptualise governance, including how public organisations should be managed. One such fundamental difference is a blurred understanding of democracy and presidential system of government due to the absence of such a concept or term in Gambian and many African languages. This is because the Gambian society had been run through monarchical systems of government rather than democratically elected public officials before colonialism. These were maintained to a great extent through British indirect rule until independence. While no longer called kings, traditional chiefs and village heads especially descendants of precolonial and colonial era kings are still accorded similar respect. Hence, elected public officials and senior bureaucrats are largely seen from the above lens. This coupled with the influence of religious beliefs and post-colonial legacy - indirect rule (4.2.3.4 and 4.2.3.5) and the tendency for many Gambians to support the ruling party or incumbents have negatively impacted on the implementation of Weberian bureaucratic ideals including accountability to the citizens.

4.2.3.9 High concentration of power in the Gambian presidency

The high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency is also a major contributing factor to observed level of consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy. The Constitution of The Gambia (1997) enables the president to hire and fire the executive (vice president and ministers) unilaterally and senior members of the judiciary (chief justice and senior judges) and senior bureaucrats (permanent secretaries, heads of government departments) after consultation with or on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission and Public Service Commission respectively. However, this is difficult to implement in practice as most members of the above commissions are themselves appointed or nominated by persons answerable to the president (e.g.,

chief justice and solicitor general). While the national assembly is comprised of 58 members: 53 elected and 5 members nominated by the president, the speaker and deputy speaker are elected from the nominated members. Although aims to ensure adequate representation for vulnerable groups of the society including the youth; people living with disability; and women, this constitutional provision and opportunity for the nomination of 5 national members provides an undue advantage to the ruling party. This is more evident in the current national assembly as the ruling coalition would have lost its majority (currently 29 seats each for the ruling party and the opposition parties combined) if it were not for the above constitutional provision. Given that a sitting president has never lost parliamentary elections coupled with the additional political advantage provided by his ability to nominate five members to the national assembly, the president can cause the removal of the speaker and deputy speaker. Besides contravening the principles of separation of powers among the three arms of government: executive, legislature and judiciary as enshrined in the Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, this practice compromises the independence of the legislature, judiciary and public service.

National elections: presidential, national assembly and local government (council mayor/chairpersons and ward councillors) are held every five years. While the most recent presidential and national assembly elections were held on 4 December 2021 and 9 April 2022 respectively, local government elections are planned for 13 May 2023. The sequencing and time gap between national elections provides an advantage to the winning presidential candidate and ruling party to consolidate power. This coupled the fact that a sitting president has rarely lost parliamentary and local government elections and the relatively unlimited powers bestowed on the president by constitution and other laws of The Gambia; provide an undue advantage to ruling party during national assembly and local government elections.

Another contributing factor to this trend is the relatively weak political party structures, especially regarding the nomination of party candidates and low civic education regarding citizens' basic rights, powers, and mandate of the government. Party leaders, including the president have a huge influence over party politics. Given these circumstances and the high chances of victory for the ruling party's candidates, opposition parties risk losing some of their best candidates and potential supporters to the ruling party. The relatively low literacy rate among the elderly (50+ age bracket)

and awareness among the public in general regarding their absolute right to equal and basic development opportunities regardless of their political affiliation is a key contributing factor to the generally high level of support for incumbents during national elections. Given the above situation and continued reliance of the national assembly members on the executive for sponsorship of development projects in their constituencies; owing to the absence of a dedicated constituency development fund has and continues to compromise their independence and impede the execution of their legislation, oversight, outreach and scrutiny roles.

Although the Final Draft Constitution of The Gambia, 2020 (failed to pass at the national assembly due to opposition from the ruling party and supporters regarding the retroactive application of the two five-year term limit to the incumbent), has largely maintain the current system of government, the Gambian president's powers regarding his relationship with other elected public officials and bureaucrats is expected to reduce significantly if it is reintroduced, passed by the national assembly and assented to by the president. This is because the national assembly will be given confirmatory powers regarding the appointment of ministers, chief justice and judges of the supreme court and other high-ranking public service positions including director of public prosecutions (Final Draft Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, 2020). Further to removing the president's powers to nominate five members to the national assembly, the speaker of the national assembly, the third most powerful government position in The Gambia, and deputy speaker, will henceforth be elected from outside the national assembly and from within members of the national assembly, respectively. This will help reduce the politisation of the executive, other arms of government and the bureaucracy. An even bigger step in improving state governance and increasing independence of the bureaucracy are provisions to reinstate the presidential term limit to a maximum of ten years (two five-year terms) and an absolute majority for presidential elections in the draft constitution. Except for Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso which are currently run by military transitional governments, The Gambia and Togo are the only two countries in the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) without a presidential term limit.

The changes above – new and more democratic political dispensation since 2017, are expected to significantly improved governance (O'Toole and Meier, 2015), including the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management in the Gambian

public service, especially in MoBSE. This is because MoBSE has had to rely on bureaucratic principles to help curb political interference during the former regime. As regards strategic management, this new political environment could further enhance the strategic space of the Gambia education sector to pursue public value and performance-enhancing strategies (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

Although MoBSE has significantly reduced its dependence on central government for development funding by improving its donor coordination and resource mobilisation capacity, it is still affected to a reasonable extent by the above factors. Overall, this has affected the operationalisation of the public-interest approach to administering the Gambian public sector.

4.2.4 Conclusions

This section builds on the findings of section 5.1 and aims to identify and explain the key drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), The Gambia using the qualitative thematic analysis. A detailed and critical analysis of the research data revealed five key interconnected drivers: post-colonial legacy, politics of conditionality by international donors, organisational complexity, convenience structure of politicians and civil servants, global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices and increasing managerial autonomy.

Regarding the drivers, post-colonial legacy and politics of conditionality by international donors, global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices, and the benefits of increased managerial autonomy for improved governance to curb both power excesses and increase public value in service delivery seems to have had the most significant contributors to the current level of entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE. While the maintenance of bureaucratic administrative structures and education system can be attributed to post-colonial legacy, these have been further entrenched by international donor requirements and conditionalities, including the structural reforms programmes implemented across Africa in the 1980s and global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices (global agreements, standards and goals on education such Education for All/Fast Track Initiative, Sustainable Development Goal 4 and harmonisation of academic subject/field entry and content requirements and qualification levels). While organisational complexity tends to be more pronounced with non-bureaucratic structures and systems (decentralised, collaborative and emergent) of governance, it has surprisingly emerged as key drivers

of Weberian bureaucracy. This is due mainly to the need to ensure effective coordination and control of MoBSE's large workforce and decentralised structures (regional education directorates, clusters and schools) and convenience structure (survival motives) of politicians and civil servants.

The main inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy include discriminatory cultural norms and practices, particularism (favouritism), performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices, religion, post-colonial legacy (indirect rule), inadequate national and organisational-administrative capacity, diversity and ideological differences in public governance. Although it appears contradictory, the militating effects of British indirect rule stems from its promotion and preservation of traditional African modes of administration and cultural practices, including patriarchy by relying on traditional rulers (kings and chiefs) to govern most parts of The Gambia (protectorate). The above corresponds with Weber's (1964) traditional (patriarchal) authority and Hyden's (2010) view that the use of indirect rule by the British, including the promotion of the natives' interest, implementation of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in the 1930s and use of the political class (District Commissioners and Officers), as opposed to the French, Portuguese and Belgian system of direct rule, played a major role in the reinforcement and perpetuation of the African traditional system of governance and values. It is thus, more likely, to find a Weberian bureaucracy in post-colonial French, Belgian and Portuguese countries than British. However, as revealed in Section 4.2, the presence of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE is quite significant (moderate). This is due primarily to international donor influences and conditionality including structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and its quest to shield itself from political interference and negative cultural influences such as tribalism and sexism.

As regards discriminatory culture norms and practices, this was through anti-bureaucratic practices such as castes and sexism – leading to education authorities having to break away from rules and procedures to manage caste-related problems. While particularism, including nepotism and tribalism as a discriminatory practice, has been largely addressed through the implementation of a comprehensive, transparent and fair human resource management system, the lingering sexist mentality among some communities and tribes in rural Gambia continue to negatively impact MoBSE and indeed Weberian bureaucratic values of equality and equity in accessing education opportunities for both girls and boys. The negative impacts of high

stakeholder diversity stems from increased complexity and difficulties in satisfying diverse and sometimes conflicting stakeholder needs and the tendency for some Gambians, including education stakeholders to pursue their personal, ethnic and political rather than organisational, sector and national goals. Organisational-administrative and national capacity issues hindering the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy's such as meritocracy and communication through the written file include inadequate qualified teaching staff and low economic development: poor ICT, electricity, transportation and health services in many school communities. The gradual shift towards non-bureaucratic and collaborative management approaches especially strategic management in the recent past, aided by international donor influence and its appeal to its political sovereigns (former President, Yahya Jammeh and the national assembly), has undermined the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE.

The negative impact of ideological differences on public governance is due to the imposition of democracy and similar modes of governance in The Gambia and many other countries with conceptually different governance systems. Given the deep-rooted nature of monarchical governance systems in The Gambia and Africa, coupled with the religious belief among many Gambians and some politicians and bureaucrats that leaders are ordained by God, have negatively affected public governance and accountability. The above has been further compounded by the high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency including his influence over other arms of government.

Despite militating against the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy's principles, the positive impact of some cultural (informal) modes of management/practices, including the exploitation of joking relationships and social ethics on community participation and school performance, contradicts the general view among scholars that informality often leads to organisational ineffectiveness (Weber, 1964; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Finally, the analysis also revealed that post-colonial legacy had a dual effect – it is both a driver and an inhibitor on the adoption and level of entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy in the Gambian public service in general and MoBSE, in particular. The significant militating effects of post-colonial legacy is somewhat contradictory to the

general view and belief that culture is the main inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy in Africa.

4.4 The influence of Weberian bureaucracy on the decision-making processes of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE)

4.4.1 Introduction

This section builds on the results from sections 4.2 (presence of Weberian bureaucracy) and 4.3 (drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy) to further examine how and why Weberian bureaucracy or other alternative management concepts, including national and clan culture, influence organisational level decision-making processes and practices of MoBSE and their performance outcomes. It, therefore, specifically addresses the sub-research question: ‘to what extent are the decision-making processes of MoBSE explained by Weberian bureaucracy or alternative decision-making models such as national and clan culture or strategic management?’ In an attempt to answer this question, this section relies largely on organisational level decision-making processes (e.g., staff recruitment and promotion), events (e.g. cabinet retreats, meetings and engagements with stakeholders, including donors) and episodes (e.g., former president, Yahya Jammeh’s initial decision for government to take over grant-aided schools during a cabinet retreat). Using the qualitative thematic strategy, the following four key themes emerged from the study data: managing unlawful and policy contravening executive directives and pronouncements; managing MoBSE – donor relations and shifting the power balance; ensuring an effective human resource management process and exploiting and navigating national culture to increase stakeholder cooperation and organisational performance. The researcher then utilised the narrative strategy to provide a detailed and accurate account of the sector’s decision-making processes and explain the causal mechanisms and outcomes of the decisions. Rather than a Weberian bureaucracy, the study findings indicate that MoBSE has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of Weberian bureaucracy due mainly to cultural and political influences. The results revealed that while Weberian bureaucracy played a significant role in the sector’s decision-making and helped shield it from political and donor interference, its exploitation and navigation of problematic national cultural issues has also enabled improved stakeholder cooperation and performance. Regarding the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and Strategic Management (planning school), this research findings indicate that it is nuanced rather than polarised. This chapter’s findings will illuminate the relevance of these management approaches in

an African public sector setting and the importance of context in the effective management of public organisations.

This section's findings and discussion are based on interview, secondary evidence, and the researcher's experience on how and why Weberian bureaucracy and its inhibiting factors, including national culture and low economic development, has influenced decision-making and their impact on the sector's performance. Specifically, it discusses and demonstrates how and the importance of bureaucratic principles in managing unlawful and policy contravening executive directives and pronouncements and reducing political interference (4.4.2), effectively shifting the sector's-donor power balance (4.4.3), increasing trust in its human resource processes through transparency and timeliness of decision-making (4.4.4), exploiting decision-enhancing and carefully navigating problematic cultural beliefs, practices and norms to enhance stakeholder participation and sector performance (4.4.5), summary conclusions (4.4.6)

4.4.2 Challenging/dealing with unlawful, policy contravening and ill-informed executive directives and pronouncements

During the former regime (1994 – 2016), the operating environment was quite challenging for public sector stakeholders. The frequent firing of top public officials, especially ministers, permanent secretaries and directors, and issuing unlawful and policy contravening directives and pronouncements was not uncommon. Senior external stakeholder 3 lamented that *“prior to the new dispensation in January 2017 [change of regime], we all experience how bad it was. Anyone can be appointed to any position, but people can also be dismissed anytime. So civil servants were living in fear of being dismissed at any point in time because the regulations guiding people's termination were not respected.”*

Despite this challenging context and accompanying negative impacts on public service organisations and policy implementation, several civil service organisations, especially MoBSE, have been largely spared of the above as none of its three ministers (all female), were fired during this period

“If you look at the former regime, there is no minister (...) with all the sackings of ministers, no minister has ever been sacked. The same goes for the permanent secretaries. This is because the ministry is well-grounded with

systems. Whoever comes the first reference point are the Act and the policies. They work within that.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

Besides, it was able to perform relatively well to the admiration of the former president, Yahya Jammeh, international donors and the public. While this could be attributed to several management approaches’ deployment, its relatively high adherence to Weberian bureaucratic ideals has been a key contributing factor.

Senior public officials of affected public service organisations were either unable, unwilling or willingly promoted and participated in implementing these unlawful or policy contravening directives and pronouncements for their selfish gains. These issues were lamented by Senior external stakeholder 2 and succinctly highlighted in the following interview excerpts:

“The other thing is that he would go with a notion that something is possible and would want to go far as making it policy or a ruling. And the sector that the issue concerns will not have the courage of going to him and presenting him with a detailed piece of analysis and evidence that would advise him against that. I will give several examples of where we challenged him and he had to back out and because of that, he ended up having very high regard for us and our minister. Because, whatever we tell him, we will provide the evidence and it will be the truth. There is nothing in it that will be of personal interest or political.”

“...that is what created problems for some ministers and permanent secretaries. When he was going around for Vision 2016 (...) - we will not import rice. I challenged the then Director of Agriculture. I asked them, as technicians when this man made the pronouncement, did you go to the drawing board and tabulate for him what it will take for this to happen? He said ah! Sir, we did not do that. I said you are hanging yourself. Because, he will sit there thinking that it will be possible for us to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production by December 2016 and you know that that is not going to be possible. In 2016 before that time, the guy ran away.”

Evidence from witnesses’ (mainly public servants) testimonies during proceedings of the recently concluded (March 2019) Commission of Inquiry into the Financial Activities of Public Bodies, Enterprises and Offices as Regards their Dealings with

Former President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh and Connected Matters and the just concluded (January, 2021) Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission of The Gambia, supports the above statements. Surprisingly and shockingly, they included senior government officials such as former secretaries-general/heads of the civil service, central bank governors and solicitors general and ministers of justice and their contravening actions, including aiding and abetting the former President in executing unlawful and policy contravening acts including wrongfully dismissing and detaining public servants and mismanagement of public funds. The above supports Dunsire's (1978) belief that subordinates tend to work under their superiors' dictates and wishes for fear of restricted access to available rewards and privileges and even dismissal. Further, it confirms the assertion that politician-dependent bureaucrats – those appointed and can be dismissed at will by politicians, tend to be passively loyal to them.

MoBSE was willing and successfully challenged these directives and pronouncements by relying on legal and policy provisions and by engaging and presenting the former President with facts. Hence, none of its former ministers were ever sacked – all but one (following a change of regime in January 2017) resigned and picked up appointments with international organisations including the UN. Examples of episodes provided by Senior external stakeholder 2 to demonstrate how MoBSE handled these unlawful and policy contravening directives and pronouncements include:

“The first time he wanted to introduce scholarship for all the girls, he wanted to make an announcement. My minister said to him, can you wait for us to know what exactly is involved. The minister called us, and we had the data, we just made a simple table showing the number of girls in each region, how we are spending on their books, school fees, etc. It was faxed to her and she took it to him. That was during the days of Ann Therese Ndong Jatta. When she gave it to him, he said no! no! no! we cannot afford this, let's shelf it for now. If she had told him at that time for him to realise that it was not possible, was that not going to create a problem for her?”

“We once had a cabinet retreat, we presented our update for that quarter, he [former president] looked at how much we were spending per child in grant-aided schools, government schools, bla, bla, bla. He just sat and he said to the

minister, can you take over all these grant-aided schools because it is government that is spending money. Our minister said to him, these are schools that belong to religious missions. That would have meant taking over St. Augustine's, St. Therese's, St. Joseph's or all the mission schools. Our minister tried to convince him during that discussion, but she couldn't. We said to our minister just wait. We went to our rooms, took data on the expenditure and also on performance to show him that for the same amount of money we are spending per child, grant-aided schools were able to get better results than government schools. We asked our minister to tell him we want to see him on this issue. We told him Sir; the minister was trying to explain to you why it will not be possible for us to take over mission schools. We have something to show you. We said to him, you see, for the same amount of money that we are spending in these grant-aided schools, we are able to get better performance from them than the government schools and if I had my way, we will change all government schools to grant-aided schools so that we can get this kind of performance. He looked at us and said, I rest my case. That was how that thing ended. It would have been a disaster."

"In 2016, he wrote to us and said we should sponsor 12 students abroad in different areas and it was going to cost us around GMD15M. Imagine in July, for September, when we had already started spending the 2016 budget. In fact, he did not address the letter to the PS. He addressed it to our minister and the minister of finance. When my minister showed us the letter, we said to her you know what (...) by then we were overseeing the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST). I will also tell you why we were overseeing the Ministry of Higher Education at the time. Again, it is to do with all these things of making promises that you cannot keep. By then MoBSE was owing the University of The Gambia over GMD28M and the balance we had in our budget was about GMD17M. MoHERST was owing the University about GMD35M. The balance they had in their budget was, I think was GMD20M something and it is even those budget lines that they were using to finance those that were abroad. We said to minister look! Let us write to him and give him these facts and proposed to him to wait until the next academic year so that we can put this in the budget. I remember the Director of Budget

at Finance telling me this is a big risk. We are going to write this letter? I told him yes. If he asks us to go home because of this, we will go home and do something better. We wrote the letter and after one week he wrote back to say that he was approving our recommendation. I can give you several others. But we were always prepared for him to give us our termination letters rather than putting ourselves in a situation where we will be attempting to do what is no feasible or not possible.

While the statements above demonstrate the implementation of Weberian bureaucracy in general, they indicate how the following specific principles and values conditions decision-making:

- Rule and procedure-based operations: refusal to take over mission schools and reluctance to proceed with the implementation of non-budgetary/unplanned activities – scholarship for girls and 12 students abroad due to lack of legal and policy bases.
- Meritocracy: this did not only influence the MoBSE's decision to do the above but motivated them to maintain and even increase the number of grant-aided schools due to their higher academic performance.
- Official communication through the written-file: The interviewee highlighted the president's disregard for official public service communication channels – addressing the request to sponsor 12 students abroad to the ministers of education and finance instead of their permanent secretaries as per the General Orders, Code of Conduct and Public Service Rules and Regulations (2013. In accordance with the above and Public Finance Act, 2014, MoBSE responded appropriately in writing and provided justification for the sponsorship proposals to be shelved for the following year or until funds are available.
- Furthermore, the former President's decision to entrust MoBSE with the responsibility of overseeing MoHERST after firing its minister and permanent secretary rather than replacing them through internal promotion, was due to his trust and confidence in MoBSE. While this could have been due to MoBSE's relatedness to MoHESRT, its ability to "*consistently deliver on its mission, working in ways that reaffirm its value proposition and satisfy the evolving expectations and norms of its stakeholders.*" (Boin, et al., 2020, p.6); was the main reason.

- Efficiency, integrity and transparency: proper scrutiny of University of The Gambia project bids and resultant cost savings of GMD20M to government.

While supporting the above, the following statements further demonstrated the sector deliberate actions in satisfying both its organisational performance goals and those of its political sovereigns and partners:

“For the President, I don’t know but I can tell you some of the things we used to do perhaps that have actually helped. Like this example of information sharing and making sure that it is available when it is needed. At the level of the Governor, when the Governor needs information, he does not have to call PS, the Director is there. When the President goes on tour, Education was the only sector where the minister will go with a dataset. Anything that he wants to know about that community, the school, the minister will be in position to provide it. In fact, he [Former President, Yahya Jammeh] used to make that remark.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

This management approach confirms the presence of advocates and statesmen – those loyal and seek to advance organisational and broader societal goals and citizens welfare, in MoBSE as identified by Downs (1967) and the relevance and importance of the Weberian bureaucratic value of professionalism to government performance in less developed democracies (Cho et al., 2013).

Another fascinating insight from the above examples is that politicians are not as bad or self-interested as perceived and portrayed. While some or most of his executive directives and pronouncements may have been politically motivated, ill-informed and fuelled by his cognitive biases and interpretive frames (Hayes, 2014; Edwards, 2001; Conger, 1990) and psychological commitment to past decisions (Hayes, 2014; Staw, 1981, 1976), most of the problems resulting from his directives and pronouncements could have been mitigated or averted if all or most of Gambian public organisational leaders and managers had adopted MoBSE’s approach.

Overall, adherence of Weberian bureaucracy has enabled MoBSE to resist political pressures and interference in its decision-making processes. While dominantly rule-following (March, 1994), its high reliance on information management for improved decision-making coincides with the rational decision making approach (Weber, 1964; March, 1994; Bratton et al., 2020).

4.4.3 Managing MoBSE – donor relations and shifting the power balance

As with most developing and African countries, The Gambian is highly dependent on external donor funding to implement its development programmes. The high significance of donor funding to The Gambia's national development is perhaps more evident in the Ministry of Basic and Secondary as it is the biggest government employer and has the broadest geographical coverage due to the presence of regional education directorates in each of the six education regions of The Gambia and at least a primary school within a three kilometres distance. About 80% of the sector's capital expenditure is provided by external donors (MoBSE, 2016). This includes individual and family-run charities like MRC Holland Foundation, which is currently "*the main sponsor of classroom construction and furniture in the education sector in The Gambia*" (Middle-level internal stakeholder 15).

Despite this high level of dependence, most respondents, especially external stakeholders negatively perceive external donors. They regard the relationship between The Gambia and MoBSE and external donors as disadvantageous to The Gambian national interest and education needs. The following interview excerpts summed up these sentiments:

"One evil thing about it is the fact that people know each time they need something with this so-called development bodies, there is somebody somewhere who is prepared to give you either in loan or soft loan, long-term loan or a grant. But these are just names for me. Grants! grant! Which is a bait. You take it, you give it in another way. Grant or loan, for me, they are almost the same and they can only impoverish us, they can only deprive us the means to learn the skills to undertake our development." (Senior external stakeholder 4)

"I think there is some support from international bodies like the World bank, IMF and others. Because, when they talk about these standards, they would tell you if World Bank heard this. I am not sure how much the World Bank is giving to the ministry. So, meeting the minimum standards is looked up with a view to what would be the impression given to these international bodies. Because, sometimes, they will say if World Bank hears that there is corporal punishment.

I said who is World Bank? Are we ourselves or are we trying to keep up to standards because of the World Bank?" (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Specific reference to how high dependence on external donors negatively impacts Gambian education policy includes: *"Mass promotion is really affecting the sector. If you look at it, a child who underperform in an exam or series of exams and you want that child to move to the next stage when actually he cannot cope in that area. That child will just be moving like that. At the end, he won't produce good results. That is a big challenge to us. If we want to go by that (...) even the ministry needs to look at that."* (Middle-level internal stakeholder 2)

While they acknowledged that external donor interests and stringent funding access and management mechanisms have some adverse effects on developing countries and Gambian public organisations, including MoBSE, most of its senior staff hold a somewhat different view. For them, the problem – dominance of Gambian public organisations by external donors, can be attributed to inadequate organisational capacity, including poor goal clarity, inconsistency, and non-prioritisation by previous MoBSE leaders and other Gambian public sector organisations:

"All international funding agencies have their strings, but you have to know your situation and how to negotiate. If you are able to bring all your needs to the negotiation table – tell them this is what I can and cannot do. If they are going to support you, they will." (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

"...based on my experience in the sector, I have been in the sector through different times. What I mean by that is a period where donors would come and say this is where we are going to put our money into, this is where we are going to provide external consultants, to a different situation where they will come and we will present to them what we feel our priorities are and negotiate with them on the basis of that. I can tell you, at the beginning, to be fair to the donors, the sector was led by people who could not even tell you that this is the type of education system we want and justify it." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

"I have seen some of my colleagues in government tell me donors are dictating to us. If you ask them, what did you present to them? If you look at it, you will

realise that no donor will want to put their money in such a project in the way it is presented. So, it like failing even before you start. I am just giving you this for people to understand that contrary to what many people believe, the donors don't actually go to that extent. You need to be able to put your case in a coherent manner, in a manner that sits well with the policy you want to implement. You do that, you don't have an issue. That was how we were able to manage these donors.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

Senior external stakeholder 2 further noted that lack of statesmanship among public officials is to blame for their continued dominance by donors:

“I remember leading a team to [name of place withheld] for negotiations for a project. Our submission to them was we were going to use an NGO called A [pseudonym] for the classroom construction because they have shown a track record of good quality buildings and delivery on time. I remember their procurement specialist saying to us that their money will not be spent like that. I told them that if that is the case, we are out. I am also not going to allow resources government will be provided with to be spent on a contract that will be executed by somebody or some contractors that we know cannot deliver. One hour later they call us back and said they have consulted with their legal team and they said it is ok. Now let us reach a compromise. Let all the classrooms in the rural areas be given to A [pseudonym] and the ones in the urban areas be given to B [pseudonym]. You know what happened? The classrooms that were given to A were all built until the children were using them while B [pseudonym] classrooms were not started. They were in the procurement process. So, when we made savings in that project, they were the same people that come to us and said now you can use [pseudonym] to do the buildings for you.”

“I remember even telling a Japanese donor at the time we wanted to build classrooms in the rural areas – Region 3,4,5 and 6 and of course the Fonis which is part of Region 2. This guy came and said to us the money they have available can only be used in the urban area. We said to him we don't need that because our conscience would not allow us to be putting up classrooms in the urban areas when they need is in the rural areas. He left and went away.”

However, MoBSE and the education sector has attracted more interest and significant funding from private sponsors such as MRC Holland Foundation, a Dutch charity in the recent past. Currently “*the main sponsor of classroom construction and furniture in the education sector in The Gambia*” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 15), it has “*From 2014 to 2020, the Foundation built 1902 classrooms, 2657 toilets, 781 teacher rooms, 288 dormitory rooms, 70 kitchens, 68 schools fenced, 108 boreholes and water supply, 28 solar installations and renovated 1215 classrooms across the country in support of government’s efforts to attain access to basic and secondary education in The Gambia*” (Gambia Education TV, 2020). Given that above and most private donors have less demands than most international donors; increased engagement, attraction and funding from similar organisations will help address MoBSE’s and its stakeholders’ quest to reduce the influence and negative impacts on external donors, especially international multilateral agencies on the Gambia’ national interest and education priorities.

The findings above echo Pfeffer and Salancik’s (2003) observation that the effectiveness of organisations is derived from the effective management of stakeholder demands, particularly those interest groups that they rely on heavily for resources and support. This also includes its ability to maintain those resources while reducing its dependence by diversifying their resource basket and mobilisation strategies. This approach to decision-making coincides with March’s (1994) rule-following vision in which decision-makers use appropriate behaviour and strategies to situations based on their identities and interest. In this case, it is about protecting national and education sector interests.

4.4.4 Ensuring a speedy, fair, transparent and trusted human resource management process

A fair, transparent and speedy promotions process is key to ensuring trust between staff and management, improved motivation among staff and overall organisational performance. Until recently, key human resource management processes of MoBSE, were handled by the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Personnel Management Office (PMO). Given the large size of the teaching staff and the need to address endemic HR problems impacting negatively on education service delivery, especially teacher appointment, reward and discipline; MoBSE lobbied and successfully negotiated for increased managerial autonomy for the management of

teachers from grade 6 – 8, through an independent and highly inclusive mechanism - Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers (CAPDT), in the HR functions mentioned above:

“That was what helped in the creation CAPDT. Our teachers after graduating or receiving their results in August, before they could get their appointment letters, it used to take six months and even one year. But we could not do it because it was outside our mandate. That was how we engaged PSC. They told us look, when your teachers come to us, we don’t ask them any questions or details that you cannot get. So, lets create this CAPDT and PSC is represented.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

“MoBSE almost constitute half of the civil service. It is a huge ministry! I remember when we started as cadet administrative officers, 50% of our staff were all MoBSE related in terms of their appointments, issue of promotion letters, longevity. It was so cumbersome and difficult. But an opportunity came when we were reviewing the General Orders, Code of Conduct and PSC Regulations. Then a committee was set up called CAPDT (Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers).” (Senior external stakeholder 3)

“To expedite the process of appointment, promotion and discipline of teachers, the Public Service Commission shall delegate to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, authority to make appointments and promotion and enforce discipline of teachers in Grades 6-8. This function shall be performed through a properly constituted committee. The Public Service Commission shall supervise and monitor the exercise of the delegated authority to avoid anomaly and unfair treatment.” (Public Service Commission, 2013, Section 1 (02108), p.10)

As regards the promotions process, it was stained with many problems, including complaints from staff due to perceived discrimination. This was mainly due to delays and a lack of a clear overall process:

“I remember going in as Permanent Secretary (PS) and receiving hundreds of petitions about a promotion that was done just before I went in. Teachers contesting why A was promoted and not me? Why A was promoted and not C?”

From that point, the way we organise promotions, because we are not responsible but the data that was to be used by Public Service Commission (PSC) would be coming from us.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

To help address the problems above, a comprehensive HR Management Information System (MIS) and a highly diverse and representative committee was established:

“We had to set up our database that would contain all the relevant information about teachers, their years of recruitment, when they were confirmed, how many times did they receive promotion. So that’s what we were using. Teachers’ Union was invited to be part of the committee. The directors in the regions and headquarters were part of this...” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

To improve procedural and distributive justice during promotions, all eligible staff – those without adverse reports, are considered. These are then screened based on merit (qualification, seniority and performance) by the promotions committee, and the final shortlist is forwarded to the Public Service Commission for approval:

“If we want to identify people to consider for headmaster category 3, which is on grade 10, we would consider all those head and deputy headteachers or teachers on grade 9 and consider the most senior. That was where the information coming from the performance management system (PMS) would also feed into. You cannot be considered if there are any adverse reports against you.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

To ensure that all deserving staff are promoted, those that are unsuccessful are allowed to appeal/contest the Committee’s decision:

“We used to leave a few spaces in case in processing the date, some would be erroneously left out. So, we would leave those spaces for people who have a genuine case. When that happens, we would write to PSC to say that this person should have been promoted but for one reason or the other he wasn’t.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

The ability to lower-level staff to contest their superiors’ (Committee for the Appointment, Promotion and Discipline of Teachers) decisions without being victimised augurs well with Weber’s (1964) principle of graded hierarchy and authority, which provides junior staff with the opportunity to seek redress if treated unfairly.

The above interventions above have increased the level of trust in the Ministry's promotions process among staff and other key stakeholders, especially the Public Service Commission and Personnel Management Office:

"...they developed so much confidence in the system, and because of that we were not receiving any petitions." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

"In fact, I remember the first time we sent it and they started inviting people for the interviews, they were so happy with the quality of the data that they [Public Service Commission] said to us (...) you know what, these interviews will now be done at your level." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

4.4.5 Exploiting and navigating national culture to increase stakeholder cooperation and organisational performance

Despite likely tensions and conflicts with other decision-making theories, especially Weberian bureaucracy (through its impersonality and equality values) and strategic management, national culture continues to play a significant role in the decision-making practices of MoBSE. Increased focus on the role and importance of culture, especially religion, on national development, including public sector and education management, has meant that the cultural context has become a major consideration in decision-making and policy management. This was more evident during the recently concluded national consultations on the Draft 2020 Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia. The most contentious issues included whether The Gambia is or should be a secular state and should the word 'secular' feature in the new constitution. While advocates for the exclusion of 'secular' and upgrading of the Cadi courts structures to Shariah high and appeals courts are of the view that religious principles should guide state governance, the opposing camp fear that this will negatively impact the rights of minorities and will further polarise the nation along religious lines. The following discusses the main cultural factors influencing decision-making in MoBSE and how its stakeholders exploited or accommodated these to enhance effectiveness.

Findings in the previous subsections indicated some significant level of entrenchment and positive impact of Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in the basic and secondary education sector of The Gambia. However, certain conditions and situations have warranted some flexibility in its implementation. In some cases, Weberian bureaucracy's principles and values are set aside entirely to address

complex/emerging cultural issues negatively impacting education service delivery, including the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of universal access goal attainment. A case in point includes setting aside the school location rule – community population size, strategic location and distance from the nearest school and establishing a school in Niggi. This was due to the refusal/reluctance of parents from Niggi (so-called masters) to send their children to school or allow them to sit in the same class with children from Konteh Kunda Suukoto (slaves/servants), where the first school was located. The root cause of the problem was believing that doing so would lead to bad luck or dishonour their person or family.

“Where that caste system was coming into play was to do with the children of the so-called masters sitting in the same class with the children of what they call their servants. It happened in Konteh Kunda Suukoto and Niggi. The way we dealt with it was, the Suukoto school was already there and we opened a school at Niggi where the servants were and the school at Suukoto continued to serve the children of the so-called masters. Because we try as much as possible not to interfere with those cultural issues. We always come up with a solution that would respect those cultural values.” (Senior external stakeholder 2)

Due to the high importance of effective culture management for increased stakeholder acceptance and cooperation, education staff, including teachers in certain communities – especially those they don’t have joking relationships with, have had to make deliberate efforts in integrating into these communities:

“Later on, I went further to this part of the (...) where you have the [name of tribe withheld]. I had to adjust to meet that cultural demand, kind of. Because for them, you have to integrate, you have to come to their level in order to be able to encourage them to send their children to school. Otherwise, they believe in the Islamic (‘Dara’) and other things. But the moment you are involved with them, you are down to earth, you try to imitate some of their cultural aspects, then you can always win their hearts and minds.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 6)

For similar reasons, teachers have had to accommodate the host community’s or students’ culture (practices, ceremonies, rituals and symbols) and exercise flexibility and leniency when dealing with issues such as absenteeism due to above:

“Of course, here, you know you have different ethnic groups and each of them have their own norms. So, you have to understand them in order to be with them. You have to accept some of their culture. Like, some children that come to school with a type of haircut, they have just come fresh from circumcision. You have to accept them like that for the period. Because they will tell you, this is our culture.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 7)

Socioeconomic factors also influence the management approach and goal attainment at school and sector levels. This includes communities’ social and economic priorities. For example, Middle-level stakeholder 3 notes that the economic orientation and preferences of his school community has impacted negatively on school attendance, academic performance and completion rates:

“Basically, the people here are business oriented. What they know is how to make money. Their children, of course, grow in that type of environment. Maybe what some of them see as value from education is to be able to recognise numbers and be able to speak English here and there so that it will enhance their business. Their concept is money, and they love to travel. They only want to know how to read, to write figures and maybe to recognise certain names so that when they travel, they will not have a problem.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 3).

To increase their employability both home and abroad, they prefer to learn a trade than get an advanced education:

“If you go into the heart of [name of community withheld], you’ll see a lot of workshops: welding, carpentry, mechanic, name them. So, most of the children here would prefer to go and learn a skill sort of than coming to school. But even those who come to school, and they are only in the morning shift, then after school, quite a percentage of them will go to these skill workshops. They’ll be there until late at night. This is one of the factors contributing to absenteeism. There is a likelihood if he has experience in working in those skill areas, he might leave school and continue.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 3)

The above preferences - learning a trade and travelling abroad over getting an advanced education, are caused by the social prestige this ethnic group and

the Gambian society in general places on the wealthy and travelled – especially those who have been to or live in the Western world.

Given that it is widely practiced among Gambians and its high effectiveness in increasing cooperation and dispute/conflict resolution, education service providers have occasionally posted head teachers to certain communities based on the existence of a joking relationship between the headteacher's tribe or community and the host community. While this increases acceptance and buy-in from the community, it also enables the school head to use the joking relationship to engage them in a frank discussion of sensitive and problematic issues affecting the school:

“If I can cite one example like Kanilai. The headmaster there is a Serer. So, he took that relationship card between Serers and Jolas. So, he is well accepted in that society. Because all the time, he will tell them that I am your king and they will say no, you are our slave or things like that. So, that man is really accepted, and I think that has really raised the level of cooperation from the parents and that school did very well in this academic year.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

A related strategy includes posting teachers to their native communities to help address low community cooperation and student academic performance. The usefulness of this strategy stems from their familiarity with the local context and high respect accorded to elders and teachers, especially in rural communities where traditional norms and values are still strictly followed:

“Another example I can give is [name of place withheld]. We have had different headmasters, but they were a bit careful because my people are difficult. So, we had to send one of us who comes from there. So, he had to tell them I am from here, I am not going to look at your mother or father's face. I am like your mother and father in this school. So, they are a bit not sure. So, they are serious with their studies.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Similar considerations are made on personal grounds (family, health, etc.):

“Some people are moved because of promotion. Others because of domestic reasons. Because, Sampierre, it would be inhuman for a lady to be married and the husband is in Kanifing and within two months, you post that woman to Basse. You are creating a problem. Some too, because of health reasons. You

don't take them to a place where they would find it difficult to get access to a health centre.” (Senior external stakeholder 5)

Key reasons for the above actions include the highly communal nature of the Gambian society, the high regard for the family as a traditional and religious institution and the relatively low level of economic development in many parts of the country. This is also geared towards ensuring person-environment fit – the compatibility and attraction or retention of its staff (Perry and Hondeghem, 2008).

Due to the empowerment of communities in the management of schools, through such as school management committees, parent-teacher associations and mothers clubs (driven by the DFID funded Basic Education Support Project for Poverty Reduction), and the need to ensure the safety of the teacher and continued community support, teachers are occasionally moved to other communities if a serious problem (political, social or economic) exists between them and the host community:

“If there is that grievance between them some of which could be social or economic. It depends. We have to look at things from the two parties. If it goes further, we also look at the safety of the principal because they own the community. So, the big office [regional directorate or ministry] intervenes when it is beyond us. That is the time the office is involved and they make their final say. But, in many cases, the principal moves because it is their community and they have their grievances.” (Middle-level external stakeholder 1)

“I can remember when I was working in Kanilai, a lot of teachers were asked to transfer because they believe that they don't know how to talk and where to talk. And they see them as the enemy because they don't support APRC [former ruling political party]” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 10: 2)

While the above two respondents were silent regarding the party to blame for these problems, Middle-level stakeholder 8 believes this was mainly due to his colleagues' unbureaucratic and unprofessional behaviour - publicly expressing their political views and participating in party politics, especially in an opposition stronghold, and for their lack of accountability to community stakeholders:

“If you are an administrator somewhere, first, you have to be very watchful. If you know that politics is the order of the day, refrain yourself from politics. Otherwise, you will not function. I am not a politician; I am civil servant.”

“I was once involved in resolving an issue in a school. I will not give you the name of the school. What this headmaster did was he organised a fundraising programme with the SMC members. They did the fundraising at night and at dawn, he packed his things and went for holidays with the money raised. Now, if the SMC members say this man has gone with millions, are they right or wrong? They are right because he did not do any reconciliation.

These statements support Weber's (1964) values of neutrality and accountability.

The high stakeholder empowerment and awareness of the importance of education is partly due MoBSE's public value and communications approach and the clan cultural orientation of the Gambian society, has contributed to some high levels of social capital and volunteering in many school communities. The findings in this section indicate that while MoBSE and the Gambian primary and secondary education sector benefited immensely from the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy especially as regards managing political and economic pressures from the executive, interest groups and donors (e.g. law and policy contravening executive directives), they equally revealed that it was its blending of bureaucratic principles with national culture (exploiting performance-enhancing aspects while mitigating or tolerating those that would lead to resistance conflict with stakeholders) and economic realities (flexible HR processes due to among others, inadequate teaching staff, relative low pay of civil servants especially lower-level staff and location of many schools in deprived areas) that made it more effective as compared to public sector organisations in The Gambia and similar organisations in West Africa. Therefore, rather than the ideal type bureaucracy, the form of organisation and decision-making approach adopted by MoBSE is a hybrid form of bureaucracy. Specifically, it is the contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy (Doty et al., 1993). The contingent hybrid type fit superiority of over the other configurations including ideal types fit, contingent ideal types fit and hybrid types fit (Doty et al., 1993); simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalised form, and adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1979); prospector, analyser, defender, and reactor (Miles and Snow (1978), stems from the fact that it

recognises the need for organisations to adopt a form that will enhance effectiveness in its context. These findings align with von Bertalanffy, 1950), concept of equifinality - the belief that there are multiple paths to an end. This case, it confirms that multiple organisational forms can equally be effective as far as they are based on their contextual realities (Doty et al., 1993).

For improved understanding of how the Gambian primary and secondary education sector evolved over time to a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy, a graphical illustration of how the above highlighted contextual factors have helped shape the contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy found is presented in Figure 4.1 below.

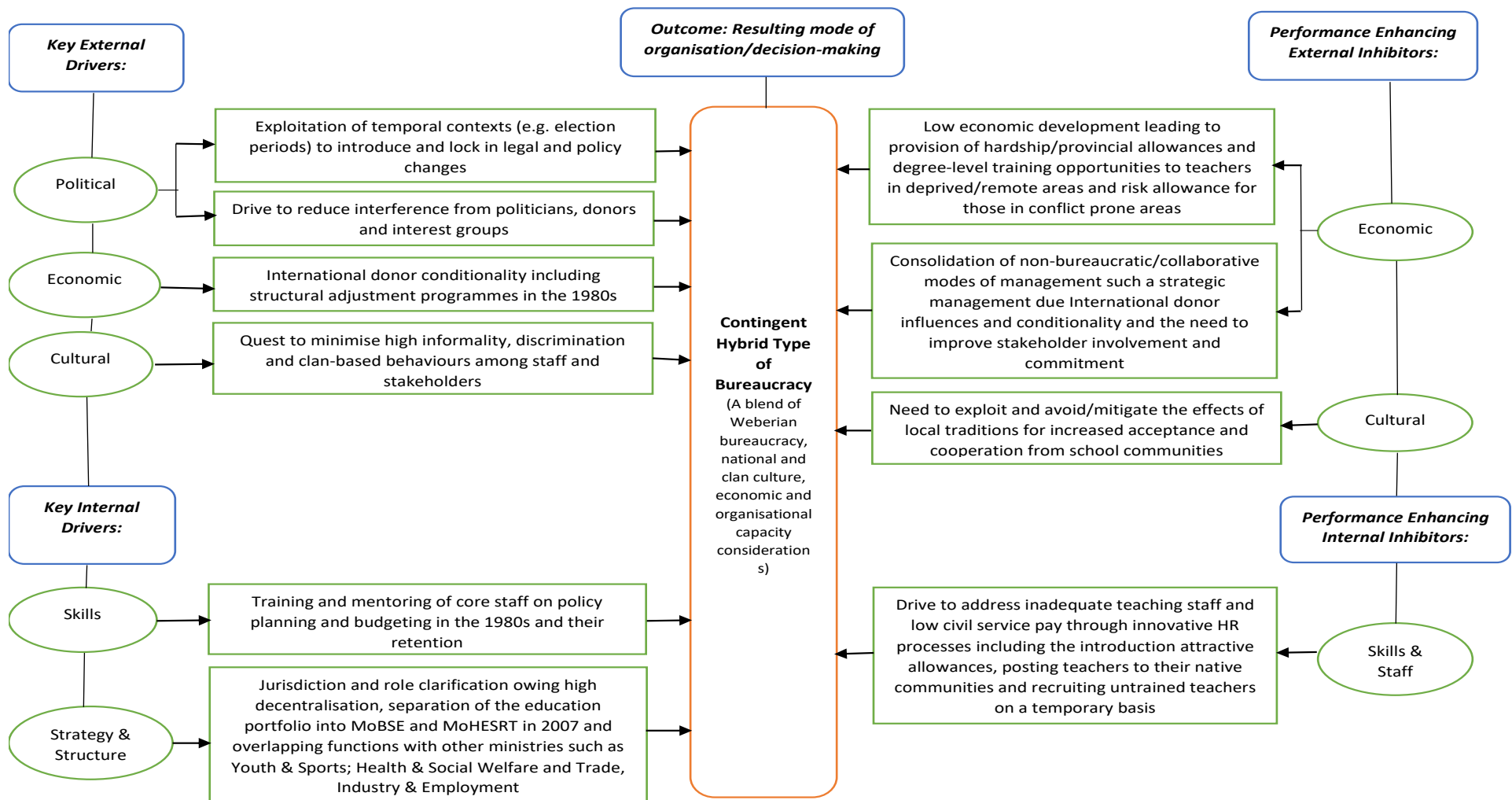


Figure 4.1: Graphical illustration of factors leading to the emergence of a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy in the Gambian basic and secondary education sector

4.4.6 Conclusions

This section seeks to examine the influence of the Weberian bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation, on the decision-making processes of the basic and secondary education sector of The Gambia, a developing African country context. To achieve this, the researcher utilised the qualitative thematic and narrative strategies in a complementary manner to explain how organisational level decision-making processes, events, and episodes to explain how Weberian bureaucracy conditions decision-making of MoBSE.

The study findings revealed that Weberian bureaucratic principles and values have significantly influenced decision-making in MoBSE and has promoted accountability and equal opportunity among stakeholders, including staff and students, thus supporting Almasri's (2011) study findings on the University of Damascus, Syria, a higher education context. Furthermore, this has helped improve its effectiveness and insulated it from external stakeholders' dominance or interference, especially politicians, donors, and interest groups. The above finding supports the view that Weberian bureaucracy is the most effective way of running a bureau and shielding it from politics (Weber, 1964; Wilson, 1887; Morgan, 1980, 1986; Sager and Rosser, 2009), the relevance and importance of Weberian bureaucratic characteristic of professionalism to government performance in less developed democracies (Cho et al., 2013) and highly informal, tribalistic, nepotistic countries and organisations (Al-Ghailani, 2005). However, the implementation of some Weberian bureaucracy's principles such as meritocracy, official communication through the written file and procedure and rule-based operations have been hindered by the need to provide universal and equitable access to education services; weak national capacity issues, including inadequate information, communication and energy infrastructure and national/clan cultural influences, respectively.

Despite their negative impact on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy, some national cultural (informal) practices have improved MoBSE's decision-making. For instance, education authorities and teachers have exploited joking relationships between tribes and communities to improve community cooperation and participation in some schools. Although several studies have been conducted on joking relationships in many parts of the globe especially Africa, they were mainly focus on their role on fun making, promoting tolerance, peacebuilding and conflict resolution

(Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Gundelach, 2000; Smith, 2004; Davidheiser, 2005; Garde, 2008; Rigby, 2012; Vaczi, 2018; Sogoba, 2018; Lamle, 2019), work relations in a large Swedish company (Nelson, 2014) and six district councils in Northern Ireland (Brown and Worthington, 2010), public relations and business strategy in the Gambian society (Badjie and Nugrahanti, 2021), resistance and contestation of power through booing of Spanish leaders and national anthem during football games by Catalonians (Vaczi, 2018), masculinity and homosocial conformance among teenage male students in three lower secondary schools in Sweden (Odenbring and Johnasson, 2020), identity construction and power contestation among Japanese female inn workers (Yoshida, 2001). These findings on the Gambian primary and secondary education sector, is thus, a significant contribution to the public management literature as they are the first empirical evidence of the exploitation and positive effect of joking relationships, an inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy, on decision-making and stakeholder cooperation in an educational setting. Another interesting finding from the study is that contrary to the general tendency for lower caste members to have lower literacy rates in countries such as Pakistan (Channa, 2015), India (Human Research Watch, 2001; Casimes, 2017), Nepal and Sri Lanka (Human Research Watch, 2001), where castes are still highly practiced and disadvantageous to the socioeconomic development of lower caste members, the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy, especially its equality and merit-based principles by MoBSE has led to parity or even higher enrolment and literacy rates among lower caste members in some Gambian school communities. This is due to the reluctance of so-called higher caste members to send their children to schools attended by those they regard as their slaves.

Due to the conflicting contextual pressures on the sector: the need to fully exploit the benefits of adopting a Weberian bureaucratic structure, including reducing interference from politicians and interest groups ; increasing its power and improving its image among international donors and the effectiveness of its HR and performance management processes, on the one hand, and the need to exploit (e.g. joking relationships) and address problems due to national cultural beliefs, norms and practices (e.g. castes, taboos) on the other, has resulted to a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy (Doty et al., 1993). Although hybrid forms of bureaucracy and contingent hybrids have previously been identified by other scholars such as Snow and Miles (1978) and Mintzberg (1979), the contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy

found in the Gambian context is rather unique due to its ability to navigate political, cultural and economic pressures and threats effectively. While contributing to higher performance than most of its national and West African counterparts (Barma et al., 2014), the above type of bureaucratic organisation enhanced its decision-making as compared to adopting Weber's ideal type. This finding is thus, a significant contribution to the bureaucracy theory by indicating that the blending of bureaucracy with the certain aspects of local culture improved its decision-making. Furthermore, it supports the view that contextual factors, including political and administrative settings, have contributed to varying bureaucratic forms, including hybrids (Painter and Peters, 2010; Peters, 2018; du Gay, 2005; Hoggett, 2005; Thompson and Alvesson, 2005; Mintzberg, 1979).

These findings challenge the notion that most African public organisations are ineffective due to their high informality level (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Furthermore, they support Hyden's (2010) view that the technocratic/managerial rather than analytical and explanatory approach to researching public sector reforms in Africa has resulted in an inadequate understanding and appreciation of the role of colonialism in shaping the current state of affairs in the management of African public organisations. They equally highlight the importance of enforcing rules and local context among African and developing country public leaders and donors (Park, 2014) and using appropriate epistemological and methodological approaches in researching public organisations.

The ability of MoBSE, a developing African country public bureaucracy, to thrive – able to deliver core services and results and earn legitimacy among the citizenry and politicians including the former President of The Gambia despite its challenging environment, corresponds with the followings scholars' metaphors for effective and adaptable organisations: pockets of effectiveness (Roll, 2014), institutions taking root in challenging contexts (Barma et al., 2014), pockets of productivity (Daland, 1981; Leonard, 2008; 2010), pockets of efficiency (Geddes, 1990; 1994), islands of excellence and islands of effectiveness (Therkildsen, 2008; Crook, 2010), and institution (Selznick, 1957; Boin et al., 2020).

4.5 The explanatory power of strategic management theories for understanding the decision-making processes of MoBSE

This sub-section discusses how strategic management, a relatively modern field of scholarly enquiry, may be used as a (complementary or alternative) theoretical perspective to explain decision-making in MoBSE. As opposed to the highly polarised perspectives regarding whether strategic management is a science or a profession and thus an art, Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) support and provide a more comprehensive view regarding the nature of strategic management by indicating that it is both a science and profession and art. They argue that the scientific nature of strategic management of the public sector is due mainly to the fact that it has become a key source discipline of public administration over the past decades. A profession and an art of public administration by enabling improved understanding of public organisations and public managers. They further argue that rather than being residual, strategic management is complementary and supplementary to other key and pioneering public management disciplines such as bureaucracy, law, political science and economics in explaining how public organisations operate and how decisions are made. Hence, knowledge in strategic management has now become a key component of public administration/management and business administration programmes and an essential tool for public administrators/managers (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Using a thematic qualitative approach and based on the available study data, in this section, the researcher aims to explain how relevant schools of strategic management frame decision-making in MoBSE.

The study data indicated the predominance and significant influence of strategic planning school of strategic management in MoBSE. It is important to note that while strategic planning is one of the earliest schools of strategic management, strategic management as a discipline has grown significantly through the proliferation of schools or approaches, including those identified and proposed by Mintzberg et al. (1998) and other notable scholars. These various schools and the broadening of strategic management are discussed in detail in section 2.3. While other schools such as resource-based and governance are expected from a study like this, the amount and quality of interview data on these are scanty and patchy. Besides, time constraints and impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic have affected the ability of the researcher to adequately gather data on these schools of strategic management. Section 4.5 explains how the planning school of strategic management frames the decision-

making processes of MoBSE. Because they co-exist in MoBSE, 4.6 further explores the mutual relationship between strategic management and Weberian bureaucracy.

4.5.1 Improving MoBSE's strategy effectiveness through strategic planning decision-making

The planning school of strategic management emphasises a more formal and participatory approach to strategy making, with its implementation (usually the most challenging phase) being dominated by middle-level staff (Mintzberg, 1998). Based on a review of relevant literature on the factors leading to effective strategic planning, their findings identified strategic vertical alignment (consistency of lower-level plans with organisational or sector plans), horizontal alignment (alignment of strategy with structure), implementation alignment (consistency of strategic implementation activities), strategic network governance alignment (alignment with networks/partners' strategies) and public governance alignment (alignment with public governance context) (George et al., 2020) as key ingredients strategic planning effectiveness in public sector settings. These are further strengthened by Drumaux and Joyce's (2020) findings on the importance of integrating rational management evaluation and political management for government effectiveness and democratic legitimacy.

An analysis of the study data revealed strategic planning as the most consolidated school of strategic management in MoBSE. This is because education policy planning started before independence (McMath, 1943) and witnessed a high proliferation after independence through the development of the 1965 – 1975, 1976 – 1986, 1988 – 2003, 2004 – 2015 and the 2016 – 2030 education sector policies. However, the first education strategic plan was developed in 1995 following a mid-term review of the 1988 – 2003 education policy. The adoption and consolidation of the strategic planning approach has significantly influenced the organisational structure, planning cycle and strategic management process of MoBSE. As regards its organisational structure, MoBSE has a dedicated planning structure - Planning, Policy Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate and was among the few civil service organisations with a dedicated policy and planning function/structure before the planning cadre and planning units were introduced in the Gambian public service and ministries in 2010 and thereafter. The above strategy and structure consistency augur well with George et al.'s (2020) concept of strategic horizontal alignment.

The establishment of the earlier mentioned strategic planning structures was triggered by the Gambia Civil Service Reform programme 2008 (implemented from 2010) – includes the formulation of strategic planning tools (strategic plans and annual budgets and work plans) for ten key government institutions¹², sponsored by the UNDP (The Gambia) and Spanish Thematic Trust Fund. Another major driver of strategic planning in the Gambian public sector was its appeal to the former President, Yahya Jammeh and National Assembly (Public Accounts Committee and Public and Enterprises Committee). This has forced most public organisations, especially ministries, to regularly develop and update their strategic plans. Thus, as opposed to, strategic planning in the Gambian public sector being either encouraged as a best practice or legal requirement as is the case in some countries, including the Russia Federation and Turkey (George et al., 2020), it was both encouraged as best practice and enforced through executive and parliamentary directives.

Correspondingly, MoBSE’s policy and strategic planning cycles are long-term oriented, and its strategy formation is separate from implementation and are highly formal and participatory. The current education sector policy and strategic plan (2016 – 2030) spans 15 years. Due to the highly diverse and complex nature of the education sector and the likely competing interests of stakeholders, this section aims to discuss how the deployment of the strategic planning school influences its decision-making approaches, as identified by March (1994) and other scholars, including Bratton (2020). This will be achieved through analysing MoBSE’s strategy formation, implementation and evaluation stages using relevant sector-wide and school-level decision making processes including Coordination Committee Meeting, School Improvement Grant management and Joint Donor Reviews and Supervision Missions.

4.5.1.1 *Strategy formation*

As alluded to earlier, the education sector’s strategy formation is highly participative and includes regional and national conferences. Recognising the importance of education to national development and diversity and inclusion to creativity and innovation, these strategy formation forums are attended by all relevant stakeholders. As part of the 2004 – 2015 Education Policy review and 2016 – 2030 Education Policy formation, MoBSE ensured that it included: “*children as well as adults; illiterate as well*

¹² Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure, Public Service Commission, Personnel Management Office, National Audit Office and Gambia Revenue Authority.

as literate members of the society; national assembly members, government departments; civil society and private sector representatives. Meetings were organised that brought together school children, teachers and parents from both the rural and urban parts of the country. These meetings included television 'bantabas' [local term for forum], children's forum and regional conferences supported by a series of television and radio programmes." (MoBSE, 2016, p.2-3)

The following interview responses confirm the statement above on MoBSE's approach to strategy formation:

"We involve everybody, we did a lot of consultations nationwide." (Senior internal stakeholder 1)

"We have regional and national conferences. In our national conference, schools are represented. They select their representative and send them to regional conferences. They come there with their issues." (Senior external stakeholder 2)

In its quest to ensure that Gambians from all walks of life are included in these consultations, *"people who have issues but cannot attend can write and send these to the regional offices. They will express their ideas in terms of what they want the education sector to look like or do"* (Senior external stakeholder 2). Although the use of national conferences as a mechanism of stakeholder engagement during strategy formation commenced during the development of the 1988 – 2003 Education Policy, UNESCO and UNICEF played a major role in cultivating this participatory approach to strategy formation through funding and use of national experts in the development of the 1976 – 1986 Education Policy as opposed to foreign experts in their first funded mission after independence to survey the Gambian education system and development of the first comprehensive education policy - 1965 – 1975 (Sleight, 1965). Inputs and feedback from regional conferences; recommendations and resolutions from national conferences and issues from its bi-monthly Coordination Committee Meetings and review meetings with donors inform the draft policies and plans. These are finalised through regional validation workshops.

MoBSE's strategy (policy) formation at the sector level conforms more with March's (1994) rule-following decision making among multiple actors with inconsistent preferences and identities. This is because the high diversity and related conflicting

interests of stakeholders often result in bargaining, negotiation, politics and agreement to reconcile differences and establish a common goal (March, 1994), in this case, Gambian education sector policy goals and objectives. The above challenges due to high organisational complexity are perhaps best captured in Senior external stakeholder 1 remarks below:

“I think, over the years, MoBSE has become sort of the most sought after. Why? Because they are in charge of education and everybody wants their sector to be reflected in the education system. So, I think that is what I called the great challenge that a sector like education faces. That it is everybody’s business, it will almost be impossible in the end to have everybody on board as regards the needs and range of services they will require. The last time I even heard someone saying they should introduce swimming in schools because people are dying in the sea from drowning. This is just to give you an idea of the expectations (Senior external stakeholder 1)

Hence, *“the participation of all stakeholders in education was central in the policy dialogue process”* (MoBSE, 2016, p.2). and has led *“to ownership”* Senior internal stakeholder 4).

At the school level strategy formation involves translating the education policy into school improvement plans (SIP) to implement of the school improvement grant (SIG). Introduced in 2013, the School Improvement Grant (SIG) (MoBSE, 2016) led to the School Management Manual, 2011, revision to incorporate SIG five-year school development planning, the Minimum Standards for Schools, and the Performance Management System (MoBSE, 2015). This policy initiative, meant to eliminate all levies at lower basic, upper basic and senior secondary levels in government and grant-aided schools, was motivated by MoBSE and the government's quest to fulfil the constitutional requirement for free, compulsory and accessible basic education and reduce the high cost of education - household spending was 12.8% of GDP annually before its introduction (MoBSE, 2016). Teachers are also prohibited from barring students from attending extra study classes due to their non-payment of fees charged by schools/teachers as compensation for their time and effort. Implemented in phases, starting from the lower basic, upper basic and finally senior secondary school level,

and paid termly, it has helped increase enrolment, retention and completion rates across school levels (MoBSE, 2015).

School headteachers initiate the SIP and SIP budget during the schools' third (final) term. This ensures that the SIP and SIP budgets are ready before schools' closure for the summer break (mid-July) and smooth commencement of the next academic year (mid-September). The process starts with the specification of the SIP development schedule by the headteacher. The development of the SIP follows this through a consultative process involving the School Management Committee (SMC) - includes the headteacher, teacher representatives, and representative of Mothers Club, head boy and head girl, and its validation by the school's external stakeholders (MoBSE, 2017).

“At the beginning of every term before you do anything, you must prepare your plan for the whole year. From there, you have your action plan, and this is prepared every term, you have the duty roster where each teacher has a role to play and so forth. From there, we have the annual school improvement plans, now called School Improvement Grant.” (Middle-level internal stakeholder 11: 1)

“...at the beginning of the term, teachers are normally distributed to the various departments and from there, they sit together and prepare the yearly work plans. After the yearly work plans, they work according to their action plans. And if there is a month designated for a particular activity, all the teachers will come together and assist.” (Lower-level internal stakeholder 2)

School improvement planning *“helps the SMT/SMC balance the individual school's needs with national priorities. It is a blueprint that outlines the overall strategic priorities, sets targets, and describes how they will be addressed, thus focusing on continuous improvement”* (MoBSE, 2017: p.18). Underlying the excerpt *‘helps the SMT/SMC balance the individual school's needs with national priorities’* and need for prior approval from Planning, Policy, Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate (PPARBD) is the importance of strategic vertical alignment – between schools and education sector policy and strategic plan for increased effectiveness (George, et al., 2020).

The generation of the SIP budget follows suit and takes a similar pattern. Once the SIP budget is finalised, consultations/negotiations are held with the PPARBD. If approved – meets requirements of the SIP and SIP budget development as per the School Management Manual, 2017, the SMC translates these into a procurement plan for submission to the RED for review and onward transmission to Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA) for further review and endorsement in accordance with GPPA Act, 2001 and prescribed forms.

4.5.1.2 Strategy implementation

At the level of the sector, policy and strategy implementation is carried out through service-level-agreements between education staff and operational plans at the directorate, department, cluster and school levels. Given the critical role of schools in implementing education policies and strategic plans, this section will focus on how the education policy and strategy are translated into operational or school improvement plans (SIP) and implemented at the school level.

Section 4.5.1.3 discusses the school improvement plan, budget and procurement plans formation processes and how they are vertically aligned (Goerge et al., 2020) with the education sector policy and strategic plan. Once approved by RED and GPPA, the Ministry pays the required funds (termly) into schools' bank accounts. The SMC Contracts Committee does the procurement of goods and services – sourcing (single and multiple), quotation/bid evaluation in line with the GPPA Act, 2001 using prescribed forms. Further, accounting, audit and reporting are according to SIG management procedures stipulated in the School Management Manual, 2017.

While adhering to the premises of the strategic planning school regarding operationalising a strategy, the short-term nature of schools' work or annual plans amidst the implementation of a teacher rotation policy (every 2 – five years) facilitates smooth handing over to incoming school management. Additionally, quarterly reviews and reporting by schools to MoBSE through regional educational directorates enable timely intervention and thus increase the achievement of the SIP and education sector plan and policy. The most conspicuous evidence of strategic planning in schools are written vision and mission statements at strategic locations such as school gate, head teacher's office and conference hall, which also aligns with the formal nature of the strategic planning school (Mintzberg, 1998; Goerge et al., 2020).

Given that the strategy implementation phase (schools policies) is aligned to the education sector policy goals and procedures laid out in the School Management Manual (MoBSE, 2017), this approach to decision making mirrors the rule-following among multiple actors with consistent preferences and identities (March, 1994). The consistency in preferences and identities among school stakeholders is due to their familiarity with the sector's policy (Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030) and strategic plan (Education Sector Plan 2016 – 2030) which were developed some seven years ago. Thus, the first strategic planning cycle – in 2016, when the new policy came into force was more difficult due to need for stakeholders to first understand the policy, and second, reconcile their diverse interests without drifting away from the education policy and strategic. The relevance of bounded rationality (March, 1994) is due to problems of adequate or timely data for effective decision making caused in part by inadequate national and organisational information and communication infrastructure, including mobile and internet connectivity in remote areas (see 5.1.2.4).

4.5.1.3 Policy/strategy evaluation

The third and generally the final phase of strategy management, strategy evaluation, involves assessing the level of strategy achievement and taking remedial measures where necessary (Johnson et al., 2019; Thompson and Strickland, 1998). Key strategy evaluation mechanisms in MoBSE, include its bi-monthly, rotational and largest stakeholder forum, Coordination Committee Meeting, Joint Donor Reviews and Supervision Missions, mid-term education policy reviews and quarterly and annual school improvement grant reports to regional education directorates.

Coordination Committee Meeting (CCM)

Introduced in 1996, Coordination Committee Meeting (CCM) is a sector-wide policy assessment forum that provides education stakeholders with comprehensive and up-to-date data and information on the level of achievement of the national and international education policy goals and commitments at the school and national level to devise appropriate strategies for addressing challenges. Specifically, it aimed at determining the rate of attainment of policy, including Education for All goals, identifying priorities and challenges and strategies for addressing them and revising national plans of action (MoBSE, 2015). Held initially in Regional Education Directorate One, quarterly and limited to senior education staff, the CCM witnessed some major restructuring in 2008 through the introduction of bi-monthly rotational

meetings in various regions of the country, school/site visits and inclusion of all key stakeholders, including education managers, planners, civil society organisations, politicians, statisticians, donors, school heads, researchers, politicians and parents (MoBSE, 2015; Barma et al., 2014)¹³.

Its importance and selection from among other policy development and performance assessment mechanisms is because it is MoBSE's largest consultation and decision-making forum and is subordinate only to the Advisory Council and Senior Management Team (SMT). Although recently adopted by Ministry of Youth and Sports and informal interviews with key stakeholders of the Ministry of National Education of Senegal revealed that it was absent and thus, still a unique practice to MoBSE in the immediate West African region.

The programme for the forum, which spans six days (Monday – Saturday), usually takes the following shape:

- a. Opening remarks by the Chairman.
- b. Statement by the Minister.
- c. Review and adoption of the previous meeting agenda.
- d. Policy and projects implementation updates.
- e. Implementation arrangements.
- f. School visits.
- g. Host region's stakeholder consultative forum.

Deliberations on agenda items (d) to (f) are highly interactive as various departments or teams make presentations or chair discussion sessions germane to their mandate and roles. Regarding presentations on policy and programme activities, implementation updates and school visits to assess performance against the following performance areas and indicators of the School Management Manual (Minimum Standards): leadership and management; teachers' professional development; community participation; teaching and learning resources; curriculum management and learner welfare and the school environment – with emphasis on verifiable

evidence. Data on these are collected using predesigned data sheets and fed the school visit reports. These feed into corrective notes (for schools) and revised programme/projects plans and implementation arrangements for the next reporting period or CCM. Except for complex issues that are forwarded to the SMT or Advisory Council for further review and approval, most are usually resolved with concrete and binding decisions for immediate implementation.

Furthermore, given the highly attended and diverse nature amidst a limited duration of the main CCM, an additional day (Saturday) was set aside in 2016 for the host region's stakeholders. This largely informal forum provides MoBSE and the host region's stakeholders the opportunity to discuss and develop a shared understanding and solutions to issues affecting education service delivery at the regional level. This place-based approach (Potluka et al., 2021) to co-creating solutions (Ongaro et al., 2021; Sancino and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2016) challenges confronting the education sector is informed by the Gambia's uneven development, and heterogeneous cultural and educational backgrounds – with a tendency for certain ethnic groups and education providers/service types to be more concentrated in some regions. These contextual differences among regions have implications for service provision and performance. For example, the predominance of informal Islamic schools – referred to as 'Majilis' in Arabic and 'Dara' locally, in the Central and Upper River Regions of The Gambia and reluctance among some members of these communities to embrace western education has resulted in targeted interventions such as awareness creation and provision of incentives (cash transfers) and technical support to the owners (marabouts) of these informal education establishments. This is to motivate them to teach core subjects like English and Mathematics.

“...Majalis are the original learning centres where students stay with the Marabout and the purpose is just to learn the Koran. So, when the ministry saw that there were children there that were not attending Madrassah and difficult to reach and they need basic education, they came up with this cash transfer programme and they piloted it in about 15 Majalis in different parts of the country. I think the initiative is just to give them facilitators. They will teach children English and Mathematics. That's literacy and numeracy and based on that, they will give some amount of money according to the enrolment to the marabout for feeding and other things.” (Senior external stakeholder 6)

The above stakeholder involvement approach has help addressed many issues in the past, including creation of the forum being discussed (host region's stakeholders consultative forum).

Joint Donor and Mid-term Education Policy Reviews

MoBSE's relative high performance as compared to its Gambian public sector counterparts and like-minded organisations in the sub-region (Barma et al. 2014) is partly due to its strong capacity in donor coordination, resource mobilisation and programme supervision:

"The most significant contributor to the education sector is Donor fund. It provides the biggest support to the sector constituting 80% of capital expenditure" (MoBSE, 2016).

This is important because government funding to the education sector has been less than the Fast-Track Initiative (FTI) benchmark of 4.2% (MoBSE, 2016). While this has helped bridge the wide government funding gap and improved education services, it has endeared it to its principals, stakeholders, and clients. Specifically, it was compatible with the former president's development priorities and had helped increase his regime's legitimacy. Hence, his non-interference and public praise for the sector despite his autocratic tendencies.

Given the crucial role of donors in the Gambian basic and secondary education sector, MoBSE has instituted and undertakes joint donor programme review and supervision missions every six months. This aims to, among others, increase collaboration, reduce duplication, harmonise procedures, reduce transaction costs and overall coordination and synergy donors for improved achievement of sector policy and strategic plan objectives (MoBSE, 2015b). Concerning the education policy and strategic plan, these are reviewed mid-way during their life cycle to ensure that emerging realities and needs are captured. While recommendations from joint donor reviews and supervision meetings feed into mid-term education policy reviews, there is flexibility to enable simultaneous formulation and implementation of emerging, urgent and important issues.

School Improvement Plan and budget reviews and reporting

The role of the School Management Committee (SMC) and its reporting and accountability mechanisms are spelt out in subsections 2.3.3 and 2.4.2 of the School

Management Manual, 2017 and include working closely with headteachers in managing schools (MoBSE, 2017).

The level of implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), including procurement of teaching and learning materials and services (e.g. staff training), and cash management and adherence to procedures as stipulated in the School Management Manual, 2017, is ensured through the submission of quarterly (termly) and annual audit reports to regional education directorates. Furthermore, these reports are also made available to stakeholders or school visitors upon request.

While highly participatory and encourages ownership by communities and increases decision-making autonomy at the school level, various accountability measures such as regular reporting to the Regional Education Directorate (RED) and regular school monitoring visits by the cluster monitors, RED and CCM promotes governance and effectiveness.

4.5.2 Conclusions

Certain trends, including public management reforms such as the marketisation of public organisations make models of strategic management originally developed for the private sector applicable to public services (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Moreover, public-oriented strategic management approaches such as the public value approach have emerged over the recent past (Moore, 1995). The above coupled with the performance benefits of strategic management (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015) has made it more attractive to public sector leaders and stakeholders. This section seeks to assess the presence and explain how of strategic management frames the decision-making processes of the primary and secondary education sector of The Gambia. To achieve this, key strategic management literature especially Mintzberg et al's (1998) and Ferlie and Ongaro's (2015) research work, was utilised. This was then used to guide the detection of these schools of strategic management using data from interviews, observations and archives.

A thorough analysis of the study data revealed that strategic planning was the most predominant school of strategic management in the primary and secondary education sector of The Gambia.

This is because policy planning in the Gambian education sector started as early as 1943 (colonial era) through the issuance of the first education ordinance (McMath,

1943), enhanced through the initiation and funding of the sector's first strategic plan by UNCESO and UNICEF when The Gambia gained its independence from Britain in 1965 and further consolidated over the past two decades due to its appeal to the former President, Yahya Jammeh and National Assembly of The Republic of The Gambia's Public Accounts Committee and Public Enterprises Committee and international donors. Therefore, apart from being a post-colonial legacy, politics and international donor conditionality also played a key role in its consolidation in MoBSE. Proof of this approach includes the existence of a civil service planning cadre and planning functions (departments/units) in all government ministries, the long-term orientation of its current and previous policies and strategic plans - Education Sector Policy 2016 – 2030, 1965 - 1975, 1976 – 1986, 1988 – 2003 and 2004 – 2015, Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2016 – 2030 and one-year development/action plans at the school level. Perhaps the most conspicuous evidence of this school is the presence of vision and mission statements in strategic locations in MoBSE office premises and schools – entrance, offices and conference halls. Implementing the sector's policies and plans through middle-level staff, including education officers and headteachers, is also consistent with the strategic planning school literature (Mintzberg et al., 1998; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015).

4.6 Complementarity; alternative explanations of decision-making processes: Weberian bureaucracy with strategic management

4.6.1 Introduction

The high legitimacy of MoBSE among Gambian elected officials and the public and international donors despite its challenging operating environment (Barma et al., 2014) can be attributed to the adoption and combined effects of several decision-making logics including Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. These study findings indicate the coexistence of Weberian bureaucracy, an ideal type of bureaucratic organisation and the strategic management, scholarly field of inquiry in MoBSE. Given the above, this subsection attempts to explain the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management, including possible nuances: paradoxes, tensions, contradictions and syncretic logics or hybrids between these two management concepts. This will be achieved by analysing theoretical literature and integrating these with some empirical reality from the Gambian primary and secondary education sector.

4.6.2 Relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management

Fundamental differences exist regarding the origin and orientation of Weberian and bureaucracy and strategic management. While Weberian bureaucracy is one of the most classical and proliferated (Torfing et al., 2020) western-originated idea-type of bureaucratic organisation (Ongaro, 2020) applicable to organisations across sectors; strategic management is relatively modern, largely private sector-oriented managerial concept and school of scholarly enquiry that gained increased applicability to public sector settings due to the numerous and profound public management reforms over the past decades (Peters, 2010, Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2011; Bouckaert, 2007). Another major difference between the two concepts is their purpose and focus. Weberian bureaucracy emphasises formality and rationality with the primary aim of ensuring organisational efficiency and public value. On the other hand, strategic management is an innovative, long-term oriented (Johnson et al, 2014; 2020; Bratton et al., 2010; Slack et al., 2013) and performance enhancing and stakeholder focus management logic (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, O'Toole and Meier, 2014). Further, it generally encourages decentralised management structures and collaborative decision-making. Despite the above theoretical differences and seemingly incompatible nature of these two approaches, they tend to co-exist in public administrations and organisations (Torfing et al, 2020). Although a post-bureaucratic and largely participatory management concept, empirical evidence from implementing strategic management approaches reveal contradictions and paradoxes. As opposed to theory and rhetoric, the consolidation of the strategic planning approach to strategic management, a managerial approach, has contributed to a more formalised and thus bureaucratic MoBSE (sector and school level) than its pre-strategic planning era. To increase stakeholder participation in strategy making, MoBSE in collaboration with development partners like DFID have developed several management tools such as the school management manual (includes minimum performance standards and School Management Committee and Parent Teacher Association constitutions and school development planning processes). The highly formalised and bureaucratic nature of school development planning, including the need to seek approval from the Planning, Policy, Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate, regional education directorates and Gambia Public Procurement Authority and provide termly/quarterly implementation and performance reports to the regional education directorate, has resulted in a more bureaucratisation.

Similarly, the formalisation and institutionalisation of innovations from the CCM through the development of new policies, strategic plans and operational manuals and the utilisation of the same forum to assess progress towards its policy targets indicate the coexistence and complementarity of Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. Furthermore, both approaches are applied simultaneously in some components of the CCM process. For example, while the school visits largely entail evaluating schools' performance against the Minimum Standards - indicating the merit and performance-based principle of Weberian bureaucracy, team members must meet the school authorities to discuss their findings. This provides the school authorities with the opportunity to clarify issues concerning their schools' performance ratings to reach a consensus regarding the actual score.

Furthermore, although a managerial concept, the strategic planning approach to strategic management has led to a more hierarchical structure in MoBSE by establishing planning functions at the regional and school levels. For example, besides being charged with helping the headteacher in the overall management of the school, the planning sub-committee of the School Management Committee is responsible for coordinating the school's strategic management process. This coupled with the already hierarchical nature of the strategic planning - separates strategy making into phases: formation, implementation and evaluation, and assigns responsibility for formation and implementation to senior managers and middle-level managers, respectively (Mintzberg et al., 1998), makes it more bureaucratic. As regards its rational orientation in decision making, strategic planning utilises environmental assessment tools such as the SWOT for informed decisions.

Potential conflict or tension between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management arises from the importance they place on the importance of social and personal, including political (national and organisational) considerations in decision-making. While Weberian bureaucracy advocates neutrality and impartiality - frowns on personal and social considerations such as political and religious affiliation in decision-making and service provision (equal opportunities), strategic management recognises the importance of these for effective strategy making. Hence, the strategy management process involves assessing all contextual factors including sociocultural realities and their exploitation where necessary for strategy success. It, therefore, makes strategic sense for public organisations to segment or map and prioritise their

most critical stakeholders or customers. While this may be regarded as unequal treatment from a Weberian bureaucracy perspective, it is considered a smart strategic move from a strategic management point of view.

While adherence to Weberian bureaucratic principles proved helpful in curbing political interference, findings from this study indicate that the relative effectiveness of the Gambian primary education sector decision making processes is due to its ability to exploit and navigate national and ethnic culture including social ethics and joking relationships, informal and unbureaucratic practices. This contingent hybrid type bureaucratic form includes traits of several management concepts including culture, Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. Thus, in these circumstances, and while it sounds paradoxical, Weberian bureaucratic principles have had to be abandoned to achieve Weberian bureaucracy's ideals or outcomes such as equality and efficiency. This means that rather than being incompatible, as generally perceived, strategic management and Weberian bureaucracy can be complementary and contribute to higher performance.

As with Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management, some subtle to major differences exist between the schools of strategic management. This includes the mode of decision making utilised. As opposed to relying on a rational decision-making approach and separation of functions as in the case of Weberian bureaucracy (Weber, 1964) and the planning school of strategic management, other schools of strategic management, especially the entrepreneurial (including blue ocean strategy/innovation perspective) and learning schools are vision-led, intuition and judgement-based in their decision making approach and advocate simultaneous formulation and implementation of strategy for increased effectiveness (Mintzberg, 1998; Kim and Mauborgne, 2004).

As regards the rate and magnitude of strategic decisions, some nuances exist. While strategic management tends to enhance transformational changes, the theoretical bureaucratic nature of public organisations usually favours incremental decision making. However, the usually large nature and financial muscle of bureaucratic organisations, especially central level public sector organisation may enhance their ability to pull off transformational changes more successfully than some of their financially constrained non-bureaucratic counterparts. Furthermore, the normative

value makes Weberian bureaucracy an effective tool for initiating and implementing change in organisations.

Despite the above differences between these two management logics, they can both contribute to organisational effectiveness as the normative value of Weberian bureaucracy and performance enhancing attributes of strategic management are equally needed by organisations for success and sustainability. Both management concepts also recognise the importance of enhanced capacity for organisational success. This is referred to as professionalism in Weberian bureaucracy and strategic capability in strategic management (resource-based school in particular).

4.6.3 Conclusions

This chapter seeks to assess the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy with strategic management on decision-making processes. This was achieved by analysing theoretical literature on Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management and integrating these with empirical reality from the Gambian primary and secondary education sector.

While indicating the coexistence of Weberian bureaucracy with the strategic planning schools of strategic management, the findings also revealed that the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the strategic planning approach could enhance the implementation of the learning and entrepreneurial approaches. This, thus, implies that while the strategic planning approach to strategy making may be considered less innovative than the entrepreneurial approach, it could play an essential role in consolidating the entrepreneurial approach by helping organisational managers in identifying the need and opportunity for change from the continuous monitoring and regular evaluation (data gathering and analysis) activities of the strategic planning approach. Contradictions include the contribution of strategic planning approach (strategic management, a managerial logic, to a more hierarchical structure in MoBSE through establishment of planning functions at the regional and school levels. Potential conflict or tension between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management includes and arise from the importance they place on importance of social and personal, including political (national and organisational) considerations in decision making. Given the co-existence and complementarity of the strategic planning school of strategic management with aspects of Weberian bureaucracy and their combined

positive impact on the decision-making processes of MoBSE, the presence and influence of strategic management can be regarded as low-to-moderate.

The above indicates a need for a more nuanced conception of the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management and among the schools of strategic management. The following chapter (6.0) provides summary findings, contributions and conclusions of this thesis.

5.0 Summary of Findings, Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Summary of thesis

This section provides an overall conclusion for this PhD research project by summarising the core argument of the thesis, informed by the results of the literature review, study setting, data and findings. It further indicates how the research objectives and questions have been addressed.

Chapter 1 introduces this research and identifies the study objectives and research questions which are informed by gaps from a detailed and critical review of the relevant public management literature in Chapter 2. Given that this study aims to examine and provide explanations, including causal mechanisms for the phenomenon above, Chapter 3 explains and justifies the researcher's choice of methodology and methods, including critical realism, case study method, MoBSE as a suitable case study organisation and qualitative thematic and narrative analysis strategies. It equally discusses how ethical issues were managed, fieldwork challenges and reflexivity. Consequently, the study findings and discussion, based on empirical and theoretical data are presented in Chapter 4, which is comprised of six interconnected sections on the colonial, political, legal, socioeconomic, sociocultural and educational contexts of case study country (The Gambia) and organisation (MoBSE) and how these might impact the applicability and influence of Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management on its decision-making processes (4.1), the presence of Weberian bureaucracy (4.2), drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy (4.3), the influence of Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making (4.4), the explanatory power of strategic management theories in understanding the decision-making processes of MoBSE, (4.5), the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy with strategic management (4.6). Chapter 5 concludes and summarises the main findings and contributions of the thesis. This includes a diagram (Figure 5.1) to illustrate the structure of the thesis and summary findings.

5.2 Key findings

This section summarises the main findings of this study. It indicates how the study's main research question: How does the Gambian cultural and politico-administrative context shape/condition the application of Weberian bureaucracy and theories of strategic management on the decision-making processes of MoBSE? identified from

a critical review of the public management literature, has been addressed. Key findings for each of the study's sub-research questions are presented below:

Sub-research Questions 1: To what extent is the ideal type (Weberian) bureaucracy empirically detectable in MoBSE?

A review of the context and bureaucracy literature revealed several gaps, including limited contextual studies on the developing world, especially Africa. Furthermore, despite being one of the most highly proliferated management logics (Torfing et al., 2020), the presence and relevance of Weberian bureaucracy, a Western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation has never been comprehensively examined empirically, in a non-Western setting to determine its presence and level of consolidation. Given the above theoretical gap and the need for more empirically based theories on context (Pollitt, 2013), this thesis provides theoretical and empirical evidence of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE, the most impacted by colonialism and external donor influence, due to its status as the oldest Gambian public service organisation (established in the colonial era) and high dependence on international donor funding.

Findings in section 4.2, largely informed by empirical data, revealed that the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE is moderate and thus it is a hybrid (Doty et al., 1993; Painter and Peters, 2010; Peters, 2018; du Gay, 2005) rather than Weber's (1964) pure (ideal) type. This hybrid was caused mainly by the moderating effects of national and ethnic cultural, economic and political factors. Although the study detected all the principles of Weberian bureaucracy, official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation, permanent/protected employment and graded hierarchy and authority were found to be the most consolidated. The procedure and rule-based principle was the least consolidated due mainly to cultural influences. These cultural factors, including norms and practices like castes and sexism have affected the implementation of sector policies. These findings thus indicate that foreign concepts/management logics must be contextualised for increased applicability to recipient public sector contexts (Politt, 2013; Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015). Given the high consolidation of some of the principles of Weberian bureaucracy, especially official and fixed jurisdiction determined by law and administrative regulation and its benefits in ensuring role clarity within sections of

MoBSE, with other ministries, especially the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and among its diverse stakeholders; findings from this study also show that adopting and adapting ideas from other contexts - administrative cultures and sectors, is important for improved public sector performance in a highly globalised environment.

Research Question 2: What are the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE?

This section (4.3) complements Section 4.2 by further identifying and explaining the main drivers and inhibitors of the observed level of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE. Owing to the descriptive power and normative value of Weberian bureaucracy, including its usefulness in promoting accountability and equal opportunities (Perry and Hondeghe, 2008; Almasri, 2011) in highly informal, tribalistic, nepotistic countries and organisations (Al-Ghailani, 2005); an understanding of the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy and their causal mechanisms could be helpful to public leaders and stakeholders in exploiting or mitigating these factors for improved performance.

Using a thematic qualitative strategy, a thorough analysis of the study data revealed several to many interconnected drivers and inhibitors. Concerning the drivers, post-colonial legacy and politics of conditionality by international donors, global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices, and the benefits of increased managerial autonomy for improved governance to curb both power excesses and increase public value in service delivery had the most impact on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE. Of the main inhibitors, discriminatory cultural norms and practices (especially castes, sexism and particularism), performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices (joking relations and social ethics), post-colonial legacy (indirect rule) and ideological differences in public governance and high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency appear to have hindered the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy the most. Although anticipated due to being considered one of the most important contextual factors affecting public organisations (O'Toole and Meier, 2014), especially in Africa, findings regarding the decision-enhancing properties of some cultural norms and practices provide interesting insights on its impact on organisational decision-making. This is expatiated on in the following section.

However, the dual effect of post-colonial legacy, including its significant negative impact on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy through the British indirect rule (which helped maintained traditional and non-bureaucratic forms of governance in The Gambia) challenges the prevailing wisdom that culture is the principal inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy in African and other developing country contexts. These findings are highly likely to apply to post-British African states in particular and African states and former British colonies in general.

Sub-research Question 3: To what extent are the decision-making processes of MoBSE explained by Weberian bureaucracy or alternative decision-making logics that can be interpreted through different fields of scholarly enquiry such as strategic management and what are their mutual relationships?

Although builds on findings on research sub-questions 1 and 2 above, this section focuses on how Weberian bureaucracy principles shape organisational decision-making processes of MoBSE. Identified through a detailed review of the study data, these decision-making processes and related occurrences such as events, episodes and incidences include donor management, human resource management (including recruitment and reward) and managing political and cultural interferences. Refuting the belief and notion that public bureaucracies are less effective than their private and third sector counterparts due to their bureaucratic nature, this study's findings demonstrate that the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy contributed immensely to shaping decision-making in MoBSE, especially its ability to curb political pressures from politicians, donors and interest groups. The above findings also point to the potential significance of the presence of forms of Weberian bureaucracy in less developed democracies, heterogeneous societies, and culturally diverse organisations. These findings lend support to scholars' views regarding the effectiveness of Weberian bureaucracy in shielding a bureau from politics (Weber, 1964; Wilson, 1887; Morgan, 1980, 1986; Sager and Rosser, 2009) and increasing professionalism and, I may argue, overall government performance in less developed democracies (Cho et al., 2013).

Contrary to the notion and findings that culture, informality or departure from Western-originated ideal types including Weberian bureaucracy are the main drivers of the

relatively poor state and performance of many states and public bureaucracies (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999), findings from this study show that some cultural (informal) norms and practices such as joking relations and social ethics enhance rather than hinder public sector decision-making. Furthermore, they validate Blundo and Le Meur (2008) criticism of universalistic approaches to researching African public organisations based on purely conceptual frames (e.g., neopatrimonialism) supported by too few and isolated empirical studies.

While acknowledging that it will be hard, if not impossible, to find his ideal type (Weber, 1964), several notable scholars, including Mintzberg (1978), Painter and Peters (2010), Peters (2018) and Doty et al., (2013) observed or indicated the likelihood of hybrids rather than ideal types. While studies such as Painter and Peters (2010) have found hybrids, these were not based on the Weberian bureaucratic logic and on a non-Western developing country context. Although coincides with the above scholars' views regarding hybrids in general and Doty et al.'s (1993) idea of contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy and his belief that multiple organisational forms can equally be effective as far as they are based on their contextual realities. The contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy found in the Gambian primary and secondary education sector is rather unique due to its ability to exploit national cultural norms and practices for improved organisational decision-making despite its challenging political and economic environment. This is a significant contribution to the bureaucracy and context literature as it indicates how contextualisation - the blending of Weberian bureaucracy and national culture, enhances the quality of decision-making of the bureaucracy (MoBSE). These findings further support von Bertalanffy's (1950) concept of equifinality, the belief that there are multiple ways to achieve a desirable outcome.

Regarding the explanatory power of strategic management, an alternative decision-making logic to Weberian bureaucracy, this study findings indicate that theories of strategic management especially the strategic planning approach, have gained dominance in MoBSE' decision-making processes. This has led to its formalisation through structures and mechanisms such as Policy, Planning and Budgeting Directorate and planning structures at sub-national levels, including schools and generation of formal long-term plans and short-term operational plans at the sector and school levels. The high reference to the School Management Manual 2017 for

school planning and performance management purposes at the school and sector levels and their vertical alignment to the sector policy indicate the significant influence of this approach in decision making in MoBSE.

Given the coexistence of Weberian and strategic management (planning school) in MoBSE and the seeming absence of literature on their relationship, including complementarity, this study further examined this. As opposed to the widely held notion that these logics are generally incompatible, this study's findings indicate the need for a nuanced rather than an antithetical or polarised conception of their relationship. This is because of contradictions, paradoxes and conflicts or tensions arising from their coexistence. For example, contrary to the theoretical premise and rhetoric regarding the collaborative and flexible nature of strategic management, the utilisation of the strategic planning approach to strategic management has contributed to more formalisation, including a hierarchical structure in MoBSE. While these findings have theoretical implications, their policy significance stems from how they could help reorient how organisational leaders conceptualise, perceive and apply these concepts.

5.3 Implications of study findings

5.3.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions to the public management literature. First, it addresses the generally inadequate empirical evidence regarding the presence and relevance of Weberian bureaucracy, a western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation in a post-British West-African education setting by establishing that its level of presence is moderate due to the hindering effects of cultural, political and economic factors and identifies and explains its key drivers and inhibitors - the conditions including institutional and external environmental contextual factors, under which Weberian bureaucracy thrives or fails in the Gambian primary and secondary education context. Overall, the study findings showed that it is possible to find a Weberian bureaucracy in a post-British Western African public setting. This is due to the generally high merit-based orientation of the British public administration which was implemented in the HR management of the colonial service of The Gambia including the Department of Education, the most impacted by colonialism due to its status as the oldest colonial government department. The relevance of the British

public administrative model over the French (Napoleonic) and German (Germanic) – highly state and law oriented, and other models, to the Gambian education system is due to MoBSE’s public-interest, management and reform orientation.

Second, despite their negative influence on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy, the study revealed that exploiting some national cultural (informal) practices such as joking relations among tribes and communities, social ethics and social capital have enhanced MoBSE’s decision-making through increased community participation and cooperation. The significance of these findings is mainly due to the concentration of previous studies on fun making, tolerance promotion, peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Gundelach, 2000; Smith, 2004; Davidheiser, 2005; Garde, 2008; Sogoba, 2018; Lamle, 2019), work relations in a large Swedish company (Nelson, 2014) and six district councils in Northern Ireland (Brown and Worthington, 2010), public relations and business strategy in the Gambian society (Badjie and Nugrahanti, 2021), resistance and contestation of power through booing of Spanish leaders and national anthem during football games by Catalonians (Vaczi, 2018), masculinity and homosocial conformance among teenage male students in three lower secondary schools in Sweden (Odenbring and Johnsson, 2020), identity construction and power contestation among Japanese female inn workers (Yoshida, 2001) role and benefits rather than on performance enhancement including stakeholder cooperation in an education setting. Besides, these findings challenge the notion that most African public organisations are ineffective due to their high informality (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Third, the study findings revealed that while Weberian bureaucracy was a major contributor to the sector’s relative high legitimacy among Gambian public organisations and stakeholders, it also demonstrated that its improved decision-making was primarily due to the blending of Weberian bureaucracy with national cultural norms and practices and economic realities. This policy management approach has resulted in a unique contingent hybrid form of bureaucracy (Doty et al., 1993) due to its ability to manoeuvre its challenging operating environment, including shielding itself from political and donor dominance and interference. Therefore, these findings are an additional contribution to the theory of bureaucracy in showing how informal, local cultural practices incorporated with Weberian bureaucracy enhanced its decision-making. In other words, Weberian bureaucracy helps to overcome the

shortcomings of purely local traditions (e.g., castes) but incorporating certain local traditions (e.g., joking relationships) into the bureaucracy improved its decision-making and legitimacy.

Fourth, revealing that post-colonial legacy had a dual effect – it is both a driver and an inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy in the Gambian public service in general and the basic and secondary education sector in particular, is somewhat contradictory to the general view and belief that culture is the main inhibitor of Weberian bureaucracy in Africa (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). This is because post-colonial legacy significantly militated against the entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy, especially its meritocracy principle by consolidating non-bureaucratic traditional modes of governance in The Gambia through the British indirect rule.

Finally, another contribution to the public management literature is the need for a nuanced rather than polarised conceptualisation of the relationship between Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management. This is because further to their co-existence and complementarity, these study findings reveal some contradictions and paradoxes in their implementation. One such contradiction is the contribution of strategic management (strategic planning approach) to a more formal, hierarchical and thus, more bureaucratic MoBSE.

5.3.2 Policy contributions

The findings from this research have several policy implications. Evidence from the study has indicated the presence of Weberian bureaucracy was moderate and that this was due largely due to the relatively low consolidation of its rule and procedure-based and merit-based principles. These were caused by national, ethnic and clan cultural influences, relatively low attractiveness of the teaching profession and inadequate qualified teaching staff. Other key factors impeding the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy include national information, communication, and energy infrastructural capacity weaknesses. These have negative impacts on official communication and sector and school performance due to among others, the reluctance of staff to work in deprived and remote areas. Therefore, there is a need for increased attention to culture management, especially for street-level bureaucrats, to reduce policy implementation problems due to national culture. Physical and systemic infrastructural problems could be significantly addressed through increased

collaboration with key government partners such as the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure, Ministry of Energy and satellite institutions such as Gambian National Water and Electricity Company, and international donors to prioritise the provision of their services to school communities. These will help improve access to communication and overall teacher shortage issues due to the lack of or limited supply of the above services.

A second policy contribution is how public organisations or bureaucrats can minimise interference and dominance from political institutions, interest groups and donors. The study has demonstrated that adherence to Weberian bureaucratic principles has helped insulate the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education from external stakeholders' dominance and interference, especially politicians, donors, and interest groups. Furthermore, it promoted professionalism, efficiency, accountability and equal opportunity among stakeholders, including staff and students. Hence, it has been rated favourably by other public organisations including the National Assembly (Public Accounts Committee and Education Committee), stakeholders including international donors and even praised publicly by the Former President, Yahya Jammeh. Furthermore, it has attracted more grant funding from donors including MRC Holland Foundation, a Dutch charity, which is currently its main sponsor of classroom construction and furniture. These have contributed to improved public value and its legitimacy. Therefore, other public organisations, especially similar sized structured critical sectors like health, agriculture and local governance in The Gambia, and African and developing countries with similar contexts should adopt MoBSE's management approach. This could be done through study tours and other collaborative learning schemes.

A third and related policy implication includes the blending of Weberian bureaucracy's principles and national cultural norms and practices, and economic factors to increase the effectiveness of education policy implementation. This includes exploiting the stakeholder cooperation enhancing benefits of joking relationships and posting staff to their native communities. Also, it included navigating/avoiding and dealing flexibly and leniently with problematic cultural beliefs and practices. The positive influence of these cultural practices on performance at the school and sector levels and the high similarity of the Gambian to Senegalese and Guinea-Bissau cultural contexts and the existence of similar cultural practices like joking relations in most African and many societies

across the globe implies that these can be applied in these societies and public sector settings.

Finally, given the uniqueness and performance-enhancing features of the Coordination Committee Meeting (CCM), the sector's largest decision-making forum and a largely strategic management approach, the Government of The Gambia must engage and require all other government ministries to collaborate with MoBSE to adopt and implement this widely hailed stakeholder involvement, decision-making and performance-enhancing management approach. Informal interviews with a senior staff of the Ministry of National Education of Senegal revealed that the CCM structure and approach is not currently practiced. As regards Guinea-Bissau, a review of literature on its education sector indicated that such a process does not exist. Therefore, and given the high contextual similarity of these countries to The Gambia, it can be easily replicated.

5.4 Limitations and areas for future research

As with all research designs/approaches, the qualitative case study design has limitations. Qualitative studies limit the ability to generalise research results due mainly to their smaller study sample sizes. A complementary quantitative study using an approach such as Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions could help determine the level of entrenchment of Weberian bureaucracy and predominance of the detected schools of strategic management and further strengthen the research results and increase their generalisability.

In addition, a multiple comparative case study of Gambian public organisations and similar organisations in the immediate West African sub-region, especially Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, using qualitative or mixed methods, will help illuminate similarities due to various contextual factors including geographical proximity, national culture and level of economic development, and differences arising from their colonial history and political and public administrative system. This will aid comparison with other like-minded public organisations in Africa and globally.

Given that this study focuses on how contextual factors affect the adoption of Weberian bureaucracy in a post-British Western African colony and the possible limitations of its theoretical contributions, a comparative study of education ministries of the various post-British African regional blocks will help explain similarities based

on colonial history and differences based on societal culture, political and administrative systems and geographical size and distance. An even more extensive comparative study of the various Post-colonial African and Asian sub-groupings based on colonial history – British, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Belgian, Italian, Islamic (e.g Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Islamic Republic of Sudan) and African (Ethiopia), will further shed light on how societal culture, politico-administrative, colonial and other key contextual factors have enhanced the consolidation of the Weberian model of bureaucracy and strategic management models and their mutual relationship in decision making. A longitudinal single and comparative study of MoBSE and similar organisations in post-British and other post-colonial African and Asian states would provide more useful insights on the applicability and influence of Weberian bureaucracy and its mutual relationship with the strategic planning and other relevant models of strategic management on their decision-making processes.

Finally, the historical context (including division of The Gambia into two administrative systems: colony and protectorate and use of indirect rule by the British during the colonial era), ideological differences in public governance with the West and high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency may affect the generalisability of the findings to other settings, especially the Western world.

5.5 Chapter summary and conclusions

African states and public organisations are grossly underrepresented in the public management literature (Dasandi and Esteve, 2017; O'Toole and Meier, 2014). Furthermore, no deliberate and comprehensive attempt has been made to detect the presence and drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy, a Western-originated ideal type of bureaucratic organisation in a non-Western public sector setting and its influence and mutual relationship with the strategic planning approach to strategic management on decision-making. This is despite it being one of proliferated management concept across the globe (Torfing et al., 2020). This study utilised the critical realist epistemological perspective and thematic and narrative analysis strategies to identify and explain how contextual factors conditioned the applicability of the Weberian model of bureaucracy and the strategic planning model of strategic management.

This chapter thus concludes this thesis by first providing an overview of chapters 1 to 5 and then summarising the key findings from chapter 5. It also demonstrates how this

research's main question: 'How does the Gambian cultural and politico-administrative context shape/condition the application of Weberian bureaucracy and selected theories of strategic management in the decision-making processes of the MoBSE' was addressed. Correspondingly, it presents this thesis's theoretical and policy contributions, limitations and areas for future research. The study indicates that MoBSE morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy because the Gambian context, especially societal cultural and politico-administrative contexts were not very conducive to adoption of Weberian bureaucracy. This enabled it to exploit the benefits of Weberian bureaucracy, including equality, professionalism, and reduced political and stakeholder interference and quality decision making enhancing cultural norms and practices, such as joking relations and social ethics, while avoiding its key inhibitors including castes and particularism. These study findings thus show that it is possible to find features of a Weberian in a post-British West African public administrative setting and that certain Weberian inhibiting cultural norms and practices such as joking relations can positively impact decision-making in public organisations. Further to providing an important qualification to the bureaucracy theory by showing that appropriately blending Weberian bureaucracy principles with local cultural norms and other contextual factors improves decision-making, these study findings demonstrate that the general incompatibility of the Gambian culture and post-colonial legacy (post-British and largely non-bureaucratic administrative tradition) is not tantamount to total rejection of Weberian bureaucratic principles. This has policy implications on how national education and international development stakeholders manage the education sector in post-British West Africa and former British colonies and African states in general.

Given that Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education has morphed into a contingent hybrid type of bureaucracy, and the need to better understand how its decision-making processes can be explained by alternative approaches such as strategic management, a field of scholarly enquiry, due to its increased applicability and potential for public management, the strategic planning approach to strategic management was used to illustrate the explanatory power of strategic management and its mutual relationship with Weberian bureaucracy in the decision-making processes of MoBSE. The study indicates and advocates a nuanced rather than a polarised conceptualisation of the

relationship between the Weberian model bureaucracy and the strategic planning model of strategic management in decision making.

While recognising the limitations of the study, including the use of a qualitative and single case study approach and the need for future research using quantitative and multiple case study comparisons among and between post-British and other colonial-based public administrative sub-groups, these study findings have potential applicability for post-British West African education ministries and states, Gambia's immediate neighbouring countries of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau due to their high cultural similarity in particular and African and post-British colonies in general.

The structure of the thesis and summary findings are illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure 5.1: Graphical Illustration of the Thesis

Research question:
How does the Gambian cultural and politico-administrative context shape/condition the application of Weberian bureaucracy and theories strategic management (strategy—making) in the decision-making processes of MoBSE?

Sub-research question 1:
To what extent is Weberian bureaucracy empirically detectable in MoBSE?

Sub-research question 2:
What are the drivers and inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy in MoBSE?

Sub-research question 3:
To what extent are the decision-making processes of the MoBSE explained by Weberian bureaucracy, an ideal type of bureaucratic organisation or alternative decision-making logics such as strategic management and their relationship?

4.2: The Presence of Weberian Bureaucracy in MoBSE

4.3: Drivers and Inhibitors of Weberian bureaucracy present in MoBSE.

4.4: The influence of Weberian bureaucracy on decision-making in MoBSE.

4.5: The explanatory power of strategic management theories for understanding the decision-making processes of MoBSE.

4.6: Complementary; alternative explanations of decision-making processes: Weberian bureaucracy and strategic management.

Findings indicate a that meritocracy, permanent/protected employment and rule & procedure-based operations principles were the least consolidated. Overall, the results indicate a moderate presence and contingent hybrid form of Weberian bureaucracy.

The study findings revealed six key interconnected drivers: post-colonial legacy; politics of conditionality by international donors; organisational complexity, convenience structure of politicians and civil servants; global diffusion of regulatory regimes and practices; and increasing managerial autonomy and seven inhibitors: discriminatory cultural norms and practices; performance-enhancing cultural norms and practices; tolerating and accommodating school communities' culture; religion; inadequate national and organisational-administrative capacity; post-colonial legacy; stakeholder diversity; ideological differences in public governance; and high concentration of power in the Gambian presidency.

WB significantly influenced decision-making, promoted equality and accountability, improved effectiveness and insulated it from external stakeholders' dominance or interference, especially politicians, donors, and interest groups. Despite their negative impact on the consolidation of Weberian bureaucracy, some national cultural (informal) practices - have positively impacted the sector's decision-making.

Study findings revealed the predominance of the strategic planning school of strategic management on the sector's decision-making processes.

Despite their seemingly and perceived high level of incompatibility, strategic management (strategic planning approach) and Weberian bureaucracy were complementary and reinforcing in decision-making and contributed to improved decision-making.

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Annex A: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

This is an invitation to participate in a study on the influence of context on the management approach and performance of public organisations. The following provides a brief description of the project.

Project Title: Understanding Context in the strategic management of public organisations

What is the aim of this research?

Public sector organisations across the world operate in different contexts/settings. Thus, there is a need for the adaptation of foreign and private sector-oriented models to recipient public sector settings for increased effectiveness. The purpose of this study is to identify the drivers of Weberian bureaucracy, a western originated and oriented management concept and other management approaches such as strategic management and charismatic leadership and contextual factors (culture and colonialism) on the decision-making practices and performance of MoBSE.

Who is conducting the research?

Sampierre Mendy, a PhD student at the Department for Public Leadership and Social Enterprise at the Open University Business School, United Kingdom will be conducting the research.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as a key stakeholder of MoBSE. For this reason, the researcher would like to invite you to participate in his research.

What will participation involve?

The main primary data collection methods of the research include individual and focus group interviews with a cross section of stakeholders and observations during decision-making forums of MoBSE. Individual and group interviews and participant observations will from July to December 2019, will take approximately forty-five minutes and will be conducted at your workplace or another location if you prefer, at a date and time that is convenient to you. Key issues for discussion will include sharing your experience working with MoBSE including its decision-making practices. An interview/focus group discussion guide will be provided beforehand. Participants are free to ask questions or seek clarification where necessary. To ensure the safety of participants, the researcher will present his photographic and other identification

during meetings. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can opt out up to four weeks after providing information to the researcher.

Confidentiality

Your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside the research team and participants identities will be omitted from the interview transcripts, study report, presentations and publications. To ensure full anonymity, participants will be provided a draft of the interview and focus group transcript for their approval/confirmation that they cannot be identified through the transcript. Interview/focus group recordings and observations notes will be destroyed after transcription and generation of summary results, respectively, and anonymised transcripts and observation summary results stored secured in Open Research Data Online (ORDO) – an online data repository for future researchers, for a maximum of ten years unless accessed and used by other researchers. The Open University is the data controller, and the lawful basis for processing personal data is that it's part of the University's public task of conducting academic research, in the public interest.

How will the study results be disseminated?

The researcher will share the study findings with MoBSE periodically and such forums will be open to all participants of the study. This will avail participants the opportunity provide feedback and ensure consent throughout the research.

Contact Details

For questions and concerns about the research, please contact the researcher and his internal supervisor, respectively.

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Thanking you in advance for your participation.

This project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion from, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee, reference: HREC/3257/Mendy'

Annex B1: Interview Consent Form



Research Project Title: Understanding context in the strategic management of public organisations

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information contained in the information sheet for this study.
- I understand that I can ask questions and/or seek for clarifications and have these adequately addressed by the researcher.
- I understand that my involvement in this study is at my free will and that I can withdraw my consent at any time without prior notice, providing any reason and with no adverse consequences.
- I understand that I can request for the information I have provided to be destroyed up to four weeks after I have provided it without providing an explanation.
- I understand that my identity and the information I provided will be kept confidential and will be omitted from interview transcripts, study report, presentations and publications.
- I understand that the interview will be digitally recorded and will be transcribed within five weeks and I can request to see a copy of the transcript.
- I understand that the anonymised transcripts will be deposited and held in ORDO for a maximum of ten years unless accessed and used.
- I understand that findings from the study will be shared periodically with the senior management of MoBSE.
- Please check if you would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript – if checked, you will need to provide an active email address.
- Please check if you would like to be contacted about future involvement in the study including follow up discussions.
- Please check if you like to receive a summary of the research findings.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's email address: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated. Thank you!

Annex B2: Focus Group Consent Form



Research Project Title: Understanding context in the strategic management of public organisations

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information contained in the information sheet for this study.
- I understand that I can ask questions and/or seek for clarifications and have these adequately addressed by the researcher.
- I understand that my involvement in this study is at my free will and that I can withdraw my consent at any time without prior notice, providing any reason and with no adverse consequences.
- I understand that I can request for the information I have provided to be destroyed up to four weeks after I have provided it without providing an explanation.
- I understand that my identity and the information I provided will be kept confidential and will be omitted from focus group discussion transcripts, study report, presentations and publications.
- I understand that the focus group discussion will be digitally recorded and will be transcribed within five weeks and I can request to see a copy of the transcript.
- I understand that findings from the study will be shared periodically with the senior management of MoBSE.
- I understand that the anonymised transcripts will be deposited and held in ORDO for a maximum of ten years unless accessed and used.
- Please check if you would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript - transcript – if checked, you will need to provide an active email address.
- Please check if you would like to be contacted about future involvement in the study including follow up discussions.
- Please check if you like to receive a summary of the research findings.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's email address: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated. Thank you

Annex B3: Observation Consent Form



Research Project Title: Understanding context in the strategic management of public organisations

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information contained in the information sheet for this study.
- I understand that I can ask questions and/or seek for clarifications and have these adequately addressed by the researcher.
- I understand that my involvement in this study is at my free will and that I can withdraw my consent at any time without prior notice, providing any reason and with no adverse consequences.
- I understand that I can ask the researcher to destroy any information that is linked to me up to four weeks after meetings/discussions I was involved in without providing an explanation.
- I understand that my identity and the information I provided will be kept confidential and will be omitted study report, presentations and publications.
- I understand that the researcher will take notes on key and relevant issues to the study during the meeting and that my identity will be omitted study report, presentations and publications.
- I understand that findings from the study will be shared periodically with the senior management of MoBSE.
- I understand that a summary report of the observation notes will be deposited and held in ORDO for a maximum of ten years unless accessed and used.
- Please check if you would like to receive a copy of the observation notes - transcript – if checked, you will need to provide an active email address.
- Please check if you would like to be contacted about future involvement in the study including follow up discussions.
- Please check if you like to receive a summary of the research findings.

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's email address: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated. Thank you!

Annex C1: Data Collection/Interview Guide for Staff

No	Management Concept	Issues
1	Weberian bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What are the bases for decision making in the Ministry of Education? ✓ How are decisions made – events/forums and processes/practices? ✓ Who participates in decision-making? ✓ How adequate are the national constitution, other laws and regulation in addressing national education needs and your organisation's mandate? ✓ What partnerships/collaborations exist within and between your organisation and its local and international stakeholders? ✓ How are recruitment and other HR processes done? ✓ What internal and external communications systems/strategies are in place? ✓ How permanent/protected is employment in the national public sector in general & your organisation in particular?
Other Management Logics		
	Concept	Issues
2	Strategic management	<p>Influence of strategic management on your organisation's decision-making practices, performance and relationship with politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How prevalent is strategic management in the Ministry of Education? ✓ Could you please describe the strategic management process of your organisation? ✓ How has strategic management impacted your organisation's performance? ✓ How has strategic management impacted its relationship with elected public officers?
3	Charismatic leadership	<p>Influence of charismatic leadership on decision-making and education delivery/performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How influential are individual employees or stakeholders in the decision-making? Is this based on personality or formal authority? ✓ How has this impacted education service delivery and overall performance?
4	Bureau-shaping strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What major internal reorganisations (structural changes) does the Ministry of Education focus on (policy, geographical, agencification, etc.) and why? ✓ What job design methods and practices did it adopt over the past years to improve decision making and job empowerment? ✓ How does your organisation manage its relationships with external partners? ✓ What strategies does it utilise to gain a competitive edge over other bureaus? ✓ How does it deal with non-performing and inconsistent organisation functions/units?
5	Politics of Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What mechanisms does your organisation use to deal with interest/pressure groups?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What measures are in place to address social inequalities – access, enrolment, retention, etc.? ✓ How has the structure and capacity of political institutions influenced your organisation's mandate and service delivery? ✓ What major organisational cultural changes took place in your organisation over the last two decades?
Contextual Factors		
	Factor	Issues
6	Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How prevalent are colonial laws, structures and systems (including syllabi) in your education system? ✓ How compatible are these colonial era laws, structures and systems with national culture? ✓ How relevant are these colonial era laws, structures and systems with national development needs?
7	Culture	<p>Impact of national culture on the adherence to national education laws/regulation and Weberian bureaucratic principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How has national culture influenced national and education laws/regulations, policies and your organisation's decision-making practices? ✓ What cultural values and norms affect education delivery? ✓ Are the measures/mechanisms utilised by the Ministry of Education in addressing social inequalities introduced from outside or are they home-grown solutions that have evolved from the local context? ✓ How compatible are external/international development partners' aid/grant/loan conditionalities with national and education law and policies?

Annex C2: Data Collection/Interview Guide for External Stakeholders

No	Management Concept	Issues
1	Weberian bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Based on your knowledge and experience, what are the bases for decision making in the Ministry of Education? ✓ How are decisions made – events/forums and processes/practices? ✓ Who participates in decision-making? ✓ How adequate are the national constitution, other laws and regulations in facilitating education delivery and addressing national education needs? ✓ What measures are in place to address social inequalities – access, enrolment, retention, etc.? ✓ What partnerships/collaborations exist between your organisation and Ministry of Education? ✓ How are recruitment and other HR processes done? ✓ How would you describe its communications strategy? ✓ How permanent/protected is employment in the national public sector in general the Ministry of Education?
Other Management Logics		
	Concept	Issues
2	Strategic management	Influence of strategic management on the Ministry of Education decision-making practices, performance and relationship with politicians

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How prevalent is strategic management in the Ministry of Education? ✓ Which are the most utilised strategic management approaches by your organisation? ✓ How has strategic management impacted on your organisational performance? ✓ How has strategic management impacted your organisation's relationship with elected public officers?
3	Charismatic leadership	<p>Influence of charismatic leadership on decision-making and education delivery/performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How influential are individual employees or stakeholders in the decision-making? Is this based on personality or formal authority? ✓ How has this impacted education service delivery and overall performance?
4	Bureau-shaping strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What major internal reorganisations (structural changes) does the Ministry of Education focus on (policy, geographical, agencification, etc.) and why? ✓ What job design methods and practices does it engage in to improve decision making and job empowerment? ✓ How does the Ministry of Education manage its relationships with external partners? ✓ What strategies does it utilise to gain a competitive edge over other bureaus? ✓ How does it deal with non-performing and inconsistent organisation functions/units?
5	Politics of Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What mechanisms does your organisation use to deal with interest/pressure groups? ✓ How has the structure and capacity of political institutions influenced your organisational mandate and service delivery? ✓ What major organisational cultural changes took place over the last two decades?
Contextual Factors		
	Factor	Issues
6	Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How prevalent are colonial laws, structures and systems (including syllabi) in your education system? ✓ How compatible are these colonial era laws, structures and systems with national culture? ✓ How relevant are these colonial era laws, structures and systems with national development needs?
7	Culture	<p>Impact of national culture on the adherence to national education laws/regulation and Weberian bureaucratic principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How has national culture influenced national and education laws/regulations, policies and your organisation's decision-making practices? ✓ What cultural values and norms affect education delivery? ✓ Are the measures/mechanisms utilised by your organisation in addressing social inequalities introduced from outside or are they home-grown solutions that have evolved from the local context? ✓ How compatible are external/international development partners' aid/grant/loan conditionalities with national and education law and policies?