

**THE EFFECTS OF TEACHERS' DRESS CODE ON LEARNERS'
LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH-
EAST AND SOUTH-WEST EDUCATION DIVISIONS**

M. Ed. (SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION) THESIS

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

SEPTEMBER, 2017

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submitted to the School of Education, Department of Education Foundations,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in
Sociology of Education

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September, 2017

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis/dissertation is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used acknowledgements have been made.

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Signature

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother Pelluna Khoswe (nee Lora).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of publicly thanking the Almighty God for letting me come this far.

I owe all the strengths of this work done to my family: my father, Mr. B. M. Khoswe, my brothers Chimwemwe, Vitumbiko and Rumbani, and my sister Bongani.

Special thanks go to my supervisors, Dr. E.T. Kamchedzera and Mr. S. Winiko, for the guidance and support during my study; to all head teachers, teachers and learners' from the schools in which the study was conducted; to my friend, Ernest Longwe and Taonga Shalom Mkandawire; and to my classmates, Prisca, Andrew, Joana, Nancy, Tendayi and Dyton.

ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology does not clearly identify the dress code for teachers in Malawi and as a result teachers dress is different in various schools because they decide for themselves what to wear depending on the schools preference. The purpose of the study was to find out if teachers dress code has effects on learners in Malawian secondary schools. Based on the interpretative paradigm, the study adopted case study design and qualitative methodology to address the issue at hand. Forty-five participants were selected for the study. Purposive sampling, convenience sampling and random sampling were used to select the sample participants for the study and to select schools for the study. The participants were selected from four secondary schools in the South East Education Division (SEED) and South-West Education Division (SWED). Data were generated using documentary analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and observation. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The findings of the study revealed that learners behave according to the way the teacher dresses and the messages conveyed through their dress. The implication is that from the various trends of dress codes, the mode of teachers' dressing matters in the type of messages it sends to learners' besides the subject matter. This can either negatively or positively affect the learning experience of learners depending on their gender, social values, norms and religious affiliation. The thesis concludes that government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) should provide a set standard of teachers' dress code for all its teachers working in the ministry and perhaps also extend for those teaching in the private schools.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
EDM	Education Division Manager
FDG	Focus Group Discussion(s)
MANEB	Malawi National Examination Board
MBCTV	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Television
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MDF	Malawi Defence Force
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MPSR	Malawi Public Service Reforms
MSCE	Malawi School Leaving Certificate Examinations
TUM	Teachers Union of Malawi
TVM	Television Malawi

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter introduces a study on the effects of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experience in secondary schools. It provides the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the research questions and significance of the study.

1.1 Background and history

According to Hornby (2001: 466) dress is defined as "a complete style of dressing." Thus, it is a body covering, attachment, or treatment; it is essentially our appearance. Apart from clothes, dress may also include, for example, jewellery, makeup and hair dos. Clothes have a simple function, which is to cover the body and protect it from the weather. Thus, the functions of dress include protection of the body against harsh weather conditions as well as covering the private parts of the body. Dress also, has cultural and ethnic dimensions (LaPoint, Alleyne, Mitchell & Lee, 2003).

In other words, each form of dress has its code. Clothing symbols are not stagnant and take on different meanings, depending on when, where and how the clothes are worn

(Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen & Touchie-Specht, 2000) and hence, people make interpretations out of dress. According to Ifedili and Ifedili (2013: 28), dress code is “a set of rules governing what garment may be worn in a specific setting.” Dress code therefore serves different purposes, for example; there are garments appropriate for church, for sporting activities, and for a school setting. Appropriate dress means modest dressing in conformity with the environmental acceptable values (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2013).

Malawi’s dress code was conservative in nature during the thirty years after independence from the colonial government. The dress code of all Malawians and people living in Malawi was clearly stated and specified as to what one should wear and what not to wear. It was established as a mechanism of conserving the traditional way of living. In March 1968, a policy was endorsed by the then president, late Dr. Kamuzu Banda to monitor dressing and this led to the banning of certain styles, considered inappropriate to the country’s culture (Kambili, 2002). The Parliament of Malawi passed what is known as the Decency in Dress Act in July 1973. One of the clauses in the Act stated that women should not appear in public in dresses that expose any part of the leg above the knee (mini-skirts) or trousers (Kambili, 2002). Wearing of trousers as part of custom or for theatrical performances, sports or pastime was excluded (Kambili, 2002). The Act also applied to all foreign women visiting the country.

It not only addressed the issues of women wearing trousers and mini-skirts but also prohibited men from wearing bell-bottomed trousers and/or wearing their hair long. The requirement for men to wear their hair short was achieved by an amendment to

section 180 of the Penal Code dealing with “idle and disorderly persons” (putting offenders into the same category as beggars, prostitutes and those involved in unlicensed gaming) (Rose, 2003). The strict dress codes of the 1960s and 1970s, and the enactment and rigid enforcement of the Censorship and Control Act of 1968 which restricted to absurd proportions the importation and publication of indeterminate forms of literature, were effected in the name of Malawian cultural and Christian traditions (Kalinga, 1998).

In 1993, when Malawi started moving from the one-party system to a multi-party system of governance, government repealed the Decency in Dress Act (Kambili, 2002). Thus, the dress code was no longer in use. This resulted in the freedom of dress and the removal of restrictions in dress. The coming in of freedom of dress brought in issues concerning cross-dressing. “Cross-dressing is the act of wearing clothing commonly associated with another gender within a particular society” (Kabwila, 2008: 72). Thus, men or boys can wear skirts, dresses and headgear which are associated with females; and females can wear trousers and shorts, which are viewed as male clothing in the society. According to Kabwila (2008), issues concerning cross-dressing are usually presented as a form of entertainment. This is usually true when males are seen in female clothing. Kabwila gives further examples of cross-dressing as entertainment that receive media coverage in traditional dances and in commercial music culture. For instance, Television Malawi (now Malawi Broadcasting Corporation television) has shown documentaries on boys who dress like women to entertain. The media also covers events at which men dress like women and vice versa (at weddings and even funerals for certain ethnic groups) (Kabwila, 2008).

Although official dress codes were repealed with the advent of multiparty democracy, women who do not dress modestly (in regards to Malawian culture), especially in public places, the markets and rural areas; are subject to harassment. In an isolated incident in Malawi, women were subject to the embarrassment of being undressed in public due to their “improper” and “indecent” clothing in 2012. This incident took place in Malawi’s busiest cities by gangs of violent male youth and vendors. This violence was targeted towards women wearing trousers, shorts, leggings and mini-skirts. Kabwila (2010) also narrates an incident in which she was harassed by vendors in one of the cities for improper dressing. She was being harassed by both male and female vendors for wearing a mini-skirt. The comments which were being made by the vendors gave the impression that wearing a mini-skirt is not Malawian and it is associated with prostitution and seducing males. This incident shows that, even though Malawi has freedom of dress in law, it still remains restricted to some extent.

Teaching in Malawi is a profession that calls for a high degree of discipline and moral attitude (MoEST, 2008). The Malawi Government through MoEST and Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) developed a code of conduct for teachers. The code of conduct and ethics of teachers is meant to guide teachers in maintaining high standards of professionalism at all times. Concerning teachers’ dress, the handbook states that “in the exercise of his or her duties, a teacher shall display professionalism through conforming to the code of dress as accepted in the profession” (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2008). However, the Ministry of Education and the teachers Union of Malawi’s code of conduct for teachers do not clearly identify the dress code for teachers in Malawi. In this regard, teachers’ dress is different in

various schools because teachers decide what to wear for themselves depending on the schools' dress preference.

1.2 Problem statement

Teachers' dress code in government secondary schools is not well established. The shift of governments from one-party dictatorship to multiparty democracy has brought change in the dress code of the country. As a result, no dress code or rules clearly state the appropriate dress for everyone. However, some professions such as banking and law have a prescribed dress code. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology does not clearly identify the dress code for teachers in Malawi. In this regard, teachers' dress is different in various schools because teachers decide for themselves what to wear depending on the school's preference. The study therefore intended to find out the effects of teachers dress on learners learning experience.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore if teachers' dress code had effects on learners in Malawian secondary schools.

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings of the study contribute towards knowledge, theory, policy and context of practice. First, the study contributes to the body of knowledge/ theory on the effects of teachers' dress code on learners learning experiences. Second, the findings will inform policy makers on dress code that would help both teachers and learners embrace a model of dress that enables schools to function as professional learning institutions. Such a development of professionalism would lead to learning

institutions develop a good impression of teachers as expected by the communities. Currently, there is no policy on teachers' dress code in Malawi so the study will help provide information towards policy formulation. There is also limited literature on dress code in Malawi. Third, in the context of practice, the finding would help to raise the awareness of teachers on the importance of a dress code. In return, professionalism in teaching would be built and maintained in most learning institutions. In addition, the study findings would lead and contribute to the development of a definite school culture.

The study was guided by interactionism theory. Interactionism theory concentrates on exploring collective (group or team) behaviours and perceptions (Reeveas, Albert, Kuper & Hughes, 2008). The theory was developed by Mead (1934) and has been further elaborated since then, as is shown in the literature review. Interactionism theory has been elaborated in Chapter 2 of the study.

1.5 Research questions

The main research question was exploratory in nature and it was to find out the effects of teachers' dress code on learning experience.

The following were the sub-research questions:

- i. What is the appropriate dress for male teachers?
- ii. What is the appropriate dress for female teachers?
- iii. How do teachers dress for work?
- iv. Why do teachers choose to follow/ or not to follow the prescribed dress code?

- v. What are the physical and psychological effects that arise due to teacher's inappropriate dress?

1.6 Definition of terms

This defines the concepts or terms used in this thesis.

Appropriate dress: This refers to modest and good dressing in conformity with the environmental acceptable values (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2013).

Discipline: This is defined in relation to freedom to teach and interact with learners', without interruption from learners' who misbehave (Guez & Allen, 2000).

Dress code: It is a set of rules governing what garment may be worn in a specific setting (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2013).

Hidden curriculum: This refers to standards of behaviour that are deemed as proper by the society and are taught subtly in schools (Schaefer, 2010).

Role model: Individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviours that are needed to achieve such success (Lockwood, 2006).

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the background and history of dress in Malawi in order to provide an understanding of the study. The theoretical framework, problem statement, purpose of the study and the significance of the study has helped to contextualise the current study. This chapter has highlighted that issues of dress code were implemented with reference to how the society was to benefit from individuals dress.

In so doing, different modes of dress had particular meanings and interpretations which in turn had advantages and disadvantages on the society.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the different related literature pertaining to the effects of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experiences and identifies the existing gaps in the literature. Secondly, it discusses the theoretical framework that guided the study. Lastly, it concludes the chapter.

2.1 Introduction

There are special dynamics in the school setting or classroom that have to be considered. Sartori, Bauske and Lunenburg (2000), state that it is widely held that teachers contribute greatly to the atmosphere or tone of their classroom. In concurrence, Baringer and McCroskey (2000) found that in a classroom, teachers' non-verbal behaviours are related to student evaluations and to rapport. There are some factors unique to the classroom setting that mediate the effects of teachers and learners' dress. According to Johnson, Darrow and Eason (2008), sending appropriate non-verbal signals, as well as recognising and interpreting the non-verbal signals of others, are essential features of good teaching. The aim of schools or any education institution is to have an environment that is educational in nature. Thus, schools have

high standards that focus on learners' performance and the learners' daily lives create the best learning environment and eliminate distractions. Studies have been conducted to address the effects of attire in an instructional setting. However, there is limited literature existing on the topic of teachers' dress code in Malawian secondary schools. Most of the literature reviewed indicates studies conducted in secondary schools and universities in countries outside Malawi.

2.2 Prescribed dress for teachers

As observed in many communication processes, verbal communication is the most commonly used channel for communicating messages (Okoro & Washington, 2011). According to Schaefer (2010), non-verbal communication is the sending of messages through the use of gestures, facial expressions and postures. For example, as teachers prepare for lessons, they put much focus on how they are going to deliver the information and make the learners understand the content taught verbally. Other channels such as touch, eye contact, body posture, facial expressions and dress are also used within the classroom in course of speaking (Reece & Walker, 2003) but it is usually overlooked by the teachers and sometimes it is given little attention. Faculty members make lasting impressions on their learners' through their appearance, specifically their dress/attire, which contributes largely to a positive or negative perception (Hall & Berardino, 2006). Dress or attire continuously sends messages to the learners. This is further explained by Blumer (1969) in his interactionism's guiding assumptions which states that meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters (Reeveas, Albert, Kuper & Hughes, 2008). In like manner, learners' behaviour leans towards the interpretation made out of the teachers' dress.

A study by Underwood, Kenner and McCune (2002), suggests that an individual's appearance is essentially non-verbal communication and influences the perception and validity of the spoken word. By just looking at a person, what an individual is wearing speaks a lot about him or her even before one begins to interact with the person. According to Reece and Walker (2003), style of dress can enhance or inhibit your relationship and your communication with the learners. Non-verbal communication has a greater effect than verbal communication because it supplements the verbal communication. In this case, instructional quality and content should complement the non-verbal content of the dress code. Sending appropriate non-verbal signals, as well as recognising and interpreting the non-verbal signals of others, are essential features of good teaching (Johnson, Darrow & Eason, 2008). Many of today's classroom settings have learners coming from different backgrounds and this affects the way they interpret various issues including that of dress. Non-verbal cues then are central to interpersonal relationships-including those between teacher and student (Johnson, Darrow & Eason, 2008).

2.3.1 Formal/ modest dress

Modest dress in schools is considered to be dresses, shirts and blouses with sleeves, shirts that cover below the waist, skirts which cover the knees, suits or a dress or shirt with a jacket on top (Wood & Dickson, 2011). In most cases, modest dress or clothing should be able to cover body parts including stomach, belly button, shoulders, chest, and the legs below knees because these body parts are seen to be private. While in a classroom, a female teacher is expected to wear small earrings and light make up, low heeled shoes, and all teachers are expected that their hair is clean and their clothes are clean, neat and presentable that is, not torn or with patches. From the interpretative

dimension, the study above leaves a gap on whether teachers are subject to the same judgment when dressed in the same manner but in a different context. In light of the foregoing, according to Blumer (1969), interactionism's guiding assumption states that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them. This study addressed the prescribed teachers' dress code in the school context and relates it to how teachers dress can be subject to different interpretation and criticism in other contexts other than the school setting.

According to Walmsley (2011), British schools often have a dress code for teachers. Primary teachers typically dress very professionally, but in clothing that allows them to work with children. They may wear trousers, skirts, and sometimes adult versions of the school sweat shirt. On the other hand, secondary teachers wear the more formal dress of suits or business-type clothing. Again, the school culture is affected in a positive way because teachers always look professional, and students generally treat them as professionals (Walmsley 2011).

Even though this is supposed to be the case in schools or educational institutions, Lang (1986) states that today teacher's dress is a matter of personal taste. Walking through a secondary school on any given day, one sees a broad array of polyester suits, shirts, pants, dresses, skimpy shoes, cowboy boots, jogging shoes, jeans, cords, and double-knit pants. Overlapping styles, both new and old, fill the school environment. In a desire to achieve individuality, teachers have rejected the notion of a standard attire. In a study Lang conducted on secondary school principals in northern Illinois, findings revealed that school administrators admit that when

interviewing for a teaching or an administrative position, they are influenced by the candidate's dress (Lang, 1986).

2.3.2 Uniform

Sartori, Bauske and Lunenburg (2000) examined the relationships among the pupil control behaviour of teachers, the environmental robustness of classrooms for learners', and learners' self-control in military and public secondary schools. The teacher's dress code in a military school was an Army uniform which was unvaried and colourless. The uniform tends to suggest standardisation, regimentation, and impersonal relationships with learners' (Sartori, Bauske & Lunenburg, 2000). This study did not take into consideration teachers who are not commissioned army officers. Thus, the study neglected some other modes of dress which could be applicable if the school had a mixture of both commissioned military teachers and non-commissioned teachers.

2.4 The effects of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experiences

Evidence had shown that teachers' dress code can have both positive and negative effects on learners' learning experiences.

2.4.1 Positive effects of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experiences

In schools, teachers' have the ability to transmit knowledge, as well as to influence learners in the classroom depending on their personality which to a larger extent is reflected through dress. Thus, teachers dress have positive impacts on the learners

learning experience. In academic circles, any form of formal dress has some advantages which include; instilling discipline in the learners; helping to preserve moral standard; creating less distraction to the learners and the teachers; classroom order is made possible by helping the student to concentrate in his or her academic work, it shows sense of responsibility on the part of the learners and decency, reputation and character formation are also formed as a result of dress code.

2.4.1.1 Role modelling

In a school setting, a teacher is a facilitator; a person who assists children to learn for themselves (Reece & Walker, 2003). Teachers are under constant scrutiny and are held to the highest moral and ethical standards in society because of the nature of their work. As a result, teachers constantly save their “face” or the “self” in order to be role models for their learners’. According to Brown (2006), the self emerges as a result of social interaction and the shared meanings and methods of communication (verbal and non-verbal) that result from any interaction. Brown (2006) further states that the self can be altered and discarded for another self if required by the cultural script which in this case is the school environment. This means that every action teachers make is done on purpose so that they create a good impression of themselves in their daily interactions with learners’. Thus, teachers carefully examine their dress while considering the classroom interaction which might make an impression on others especially the learners’.

According to Lockwood (2006), role models are individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviour that is needed to achieve such success. By identifying with an outstanding

role model, individuals can become inspired to pursue similar achievements (Lockwood, 2006). Another term for role model is identification. Role models influence others through their way of life, for example; the way they dress, talk and how they do things. Teachers play major modelling roles in the lives of learners and the community in which they live in. People are often judged by their appearance. Hurst and Reding (2000) advise that a teacher should look like the teacher, not like one of the learners’.

A study by Quick and Siebörger (2005) involving teachers and student teachers involved in teaching practice sought to identify the factors that make a qualitative difference to school experience in the training of teachers. The study found that the professionalism of the university students was expected to be exhibited through their dress. Quick and Siebörger (2005) further state that many educational institutions confront the issue of dress in the information booklets that they give their education students. For example, South Bank University in London has an approximately 80-page school experience handbook for its education students. It states, “Students should take account of the ethos of the school and dress sensitively. Students are advised to consult the class teacher about dress codes before the start of the school experience” (South Bank University, 2002: 5 as quoted in Quick & Siebörger, 2005). Likewise many American universities look at look at professional image through dress as part of the overall grade of the student, within the student teaching course (Central Michigan University, 2002: 46 as quoted in Quick & Siebörger, 2005).

2.4.1.2 Discipline

Discipline means freedom to teach and interact with learners', without interruption from learners' who misbehave (Guez & Allen, 2000). According to Sartori, Bauske and Lunenburg (2000), teachers to a larger extent contribute a great deal to the atmosphere or tone of their classrooms. Thus, teachers have control over what ever activities happen in a classroom.

Teachers undergo theoretical training and later do teaching practice before being recruited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The practicum experiences help student teachers develop a contextualised understanding of the intricacies of teaching and provide an opportunity to develop competencies across a range of areas including classroom management skills, the fundamentals of lesson planning, awareness of personal teaching style, and the ability to interact with learners' (Kaphesi, 2013). Right from the beginning, student teachers are taught how to present themselves to learners' and issues of dress code are emphasised such that the teacher is assessed on his or her knowledge of the subject matter and presentability (dress and appearance). Teacher training programmes strive to deal with anxieties and to do the best they can in preparing graduate learners' for their instructional roles (Kaphesi, 2013). All the training is done to deal with promoting cognitive and affective learning.

According to Ifideli and Ifideli (2013), in academic circles any form of official dress code has advantages which include: instilling discipline in the learners'; helping to preserve moral standards by lowering sexual abuse and harassment; creating less distraction to both the learners' and the teachers. Classroom order is made possible by

helping the student to concentrate on his or her academic work; it shows sense of responsibility on the part of the learners'. Ifideli and Ifideli further state that decency, reputation and character formation are also other benefits of dress code; it is all about acceptable image and prepares the student for the labour market by instilling in them the habit of dressing well, so that learners' are taught what sort of dress will serve them best professionally and socially. Indeed, educators create favourable impressions on learners by presenting themselves in professional or appropriate attire. Discipline is a very important factor of such an enabling operational climate. The attitudes and values of learners' constitute the critical factor in the level of discipline in the school.

According to Simmons (1996), teachers are role models and should therefore be concerned about their attire. He further states that, mini-skirts, very low-cut blouses, shorts, tight stretch pants, and shirts with questionable slogans are quite damaging to a wholesome learning environment. Being overdressed can be as detrimental as being too casually dressed. A thoughtful, conservative, well-coordinated wardrobe is all that is necessary. Modest fashion will not only convey a better public image of the kind of business being done; it will impart an air of authority and dignity (Simmons, 1996). With the recent flurry of molestation and harassment charges, it is absolutely essential that teachers do everything possible to prevent anything that might cause their behaviour to become suspect. Thus, the more decorum that can be conveyed through dress, the better.

Student-teacher relationships are a key feature of school life (Pomeroy, 1999). In Malawi, teachers in a school and within a community form part of the social hierarchy. Teachers are seen as playing the role parents or any other elderly person

does in the society regardless of age and sex. Clearly, the young people feel that teachers are responsible for the monitoring and ultimate control of student behaviour (Pomeroy, 1999). Thus, teachers are seen as authority figures.

During the one-party era, both inside and outside the classroom the teacher was a powerful figure with all authority in the implementation of teaching and learning processes (Kamangira & Kasambara, 2001). They could set rules for their class, reduce indiscipline and administer punishment to any mischief makers without anybody questioning the teacher. The community looked upon the teacher as a role model for their children. This helped the teachers to be successful in instituting discipline without the community and the government opposing (Kamangira & Kasambara, 2001).

Weber and Mitchell (2004) in their analysis of teachers' comments suggested that to many, clothing is not only a means of identifying oneself as teacher, but is also a pedagogical strategy in itself, a means of commanding respect and order, of establishing a serious working atmosphere, and of exerting control. A teacher has to be perfectly dressed and groomed in order to develop distance, superior knowledge, and status in the school.

Furthermore, a study of military and public secondary schools suggested that military secondary schools provide less robust environments than public secondary schools (Sartori, Bauske & Lunenburg, 2000). One reason for this suggestion is that military secondary schools, by their very nature, reinforce status differentiation between student and teacher in the way they dressed. For example, all of the classroom

teachers in the military secondary school classrooms surveyed were commissioned officers in the Army (Sartori, Bauske & Lunenburg, 2000). Social distance between teacher and student was strictly enforced in the military school.

Davis, Clarke, Francis, Hughes, MacMillan, McNeill and Westhaver (1992) conducted a study of teachers' dress code using photographs with high school learners'. They found that junior high learners', when shown photos of teachers in formal dress and in casual dress, expected more respect to be shown to the teacher in formal dress.

Furthermore, Newhouse (1984) found significant effects of dress in teacher-to-teacher interactions. Specifically, Newhouse found that for elementary and secondary teachers, age, gender, and clothing fashion ability affect one's desirability as a partner on a cooperative project.

2.4.2 Negative effects of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experiences

Personality reflected through dress and attire positively or negatively impacts teacher-student relationships in the classroom and creates a lasting impression for the learners'. Despite dress codes having advantages for learners, some dress codes also serve a different purpose all together. For example, learners begin to concentrate on the mode of dress or appearance of the teacher, so it becomes disruptive and distracting. Ifideli and Ifideli (2013) state that the modes of dress which cause disruption and distraction include: trousers and skirts worn below the waist (popularly known as sagging or *kukhwefula*); low neck blouses exposing the breasts and chest;

skirts with slits above the knees; see-through dresses, shirts and blouses; clothes printed with offensive or obscene wording; revealing attire like mini-skirts; bathroom slippers; worn out shoes and shirts; clothing, including T-shirts, which displays sex, violence, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, death, gang or hate slogans or pictures; tight trousers, shirts, dresses or skirts; baggy trousers; non-natural coloured hair, hats, caps, sunglasses, body-piercing jewellery, except earrings for women; chains, hand bands, tattoos and noisy shoe heels. It should be noted that learners too, may dress in this way and the disruptions apply equally to them.

2.5 Theoretical framework

According to Given (2008: 869) theoretical framework is defined as “any empirical or quasi-empirical theory of social and/or psychological processes, at a variety of levels that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena.” The current study looked at post-structuralism, non-verbal communication theory and interactionism theory as possible theories to guide the study. However, the study adopted interactionism theory as the main guiding theory.

2.5.1 Post-structuralism

According to Gnanasekaran (2015), post-structuralism is a movement in social sciences that developed in France in the late 1960s. Michel Foucault, Ferdinand de Saussure and Jacques Derrida were the major proponents of the theory. It is the result of both the structuralist period of examining sign and structure, and the humanist paradigm of concentrating on the texts, the writers, the readers, and histories (Gnanasekaran, 2015). Post-structuralist perspectives tend to concentrate on the operation of language, the production of meaning, and the ways in which knowledge

and power combine to create accepted or taken-for-granted forms of knowledge and social practices (Given, 2008). In this school of thought, meaning can never be regarded as being fixed or stable, but has always to be seen as ever changing and fluid. Thus, meaning can be produced and temporarily fixed only in specific contexts.

Rice and Waugh (1992) state that in the system of difference proposed by Saussure the sign made up of the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, fixed by social contract. Once transformed, the sign becomes a totality; signifier and signified are inseparable and the signs form and meaning are self-identical (Rice & Waugh, 1992: 111). In relation to the study, the theory help to elaborate how learners interpret teachers dress and how the interpretations change within the school context. Thus, the theory answers the question of how a teacher (signifier) portray different messages or signs through their dressing and how learners (signified) interpret those messages or signs. However, the theory has limitations in the current study because its emphasis is on the importance of difference. Thus, it is mainly focused on how to come up with an independent line of thought concerning things happening in the society.

2.5.2 Non-verbal communication theory

Communication theory is the theory of how humans share, encode, and decode what they know, what they need, and what they expect from each other. Communication plays an important role in the construction of society. Through day to day communication, we construct, reaffirm, experience and alter the reality of our society (Newman, 2012). According to Schaefer (2010), non-verbal communication is the sending of messages through the use of gestures, facial expressions and postures.

Thus, messages people send to others that do not contain words but are sent through body motions.

The theory was developed by Abraham Mehrabia and Judee Burgoon. Each person has expectations for behaviour in different situations. People develop assumptions about the appropriate and expected behaviour of others. By just looking at a person, what an individual is putting on, speaks a lot about him or her even before one begins to interact with the person. Non-verbal cues then are central to interpersonal relationships-including those between teacher and student (Johnson, Darrow & Eason, 2008). In relation to the study, the theory helped elaborate issues of clothing, gestures and body language among the participants. The limitations of this theory to the study are that it is mostly focused on minimising ineffective communication by removing communication barriers. Thus, it focuses on the importance of sending corresponding non-verbal cues and understanding the non-verbal communication to build a connection with the audience or society.

2.5.3 Interactionism theory

The study embraced interactionism theory which concentrates on exploring collective (group or team) behaviours and perceptions (Reeveas, Albert, Kuper & Hughes, 2008). Interactionism theory was developed by Mead (1934), and later expanded upon by Blumer (1969). According to Schaefer (2010), interactionism theory aimed to provide an understanding of individuals' interactions by examining the symbols, especially the language, they use in their daily encounters. In particular, interactionism is an approach that aims to elicit an understanding of how meaning is created and modified by individuals through their social actions, interactions, and

reactions (Schaefer, 2010). Blumer (1969) outlined interactionism's three guiding assumptions: that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, social interaction with one's fellows; that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters (Reeveas, Albert, Kuper & Hughes, 2008).

Teachers' dress is subject to different interpretations. Every phenomenon in society is subject to interpretation. In relation to the study, interpretative theory helps answer and elaborate how and why teachers and learners establish social meanings and interpretation from teachers' dress code in a school environment. In addition, the theory is attempting to understand how participants make sense and interpret their experiences in different contexts of the school setting. The theory seeks to establish social meanings and interpretation from varying modes of dress from the participants. The learners as well as fellow teachers recognise that this involves a process of interpretation. In this approach, subjective meanings are taken into consideration.

2. 6 Chapter summary

Existing literature review helped to familiarise the current study to the available body of knowledge in the area of interest. It further sought to clarify the relationship between the research topic and previous work conducted on effects of teachers dress on learners learning experience. From the literature review, the issues in which the study was embedded were exploited in form of themes which had been put forward to explain the various areas of the study. Dress code was discussed with reference to its advantages and disadvantages and its effects on learners. From each research

question, several themes and sub-themes were identified on the advantages of a dress code and its implications for the learning process and the mode of teachers' dress. For the learners, having a school uniform leads to social benefits and discipline in the school. As for the teachers, having a dress code affects learners in two ways; role modelling and discipline. Concerning the prescribed dress code for teachers, formal/decent dress and uniforms were identified.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the overall study approach. It discusses the theoretical perspective that guided the choice of the research design and methodology for this study. It also presents the research design employed and the qualitative methodology used to address the issue at hand. Next, the research protocols for the sampling method applied and how they were used in the study are described. The third part details what methods were used to generate data and the role of the researcher. The last part of the chapter presents how data was analysed and managed once it was generated from the field. Other practical issues that have been addressed are credibility and trustworthiness of the study and ethical issues.

3.1 Research paradigm

The study was located within the interpretative paradigm. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), the central endeavour in the context of the interpretative paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Thus, the interpretative paradigm pays close attention to the way in which ‘definitions of reality’ are used and

sustained by actors and they show how these definitions may be disputed by individuals or groups and how actors negotiate shared rules and ideas (Best, 2003). The theory therefore sees human beings at the Centre of everything that is taking place in a society. People create and control a society and their behaviour is determined by what meanings they attach to a situation. Action consists of the structure and process by which human beings form meaningful intentions and more or less successfully implement them in concrete situations (Best, 2003). This explains that human activities are mostly ruled by agreed interpretations or meanings whereby a particular action is connected to a meaning. Our social cultural world provides us with cultural values and norms that serve as the foundation for our perceptions and interpretations (Best, 2003). Thus, society in this theory is an organised structure whereby actions are referred to a set of rules and regulations for interpretation and any deviation from these are treated with curiosity. As such, this study looks into dress and dress code as being created and controlled by the people and society.

3.2 Research design

The study adopted a case study design. “A case study is an approach to research which seeks to engage with and report the complexity of social and educational activity, in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them” (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011: 53). According to Cohen and Manion (2007), a case study researcher observes the characteristics of an individual unit, a child, a clique, a class, a school or a community. Cohen and Manion, further state that the purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the different phenomena that constitutes the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that

unit belongs. In other words, the aim of a case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of a case and the interaction between the phenomenon and the case (Randolph, 2007).

A descriptive case study was adopted. A descriptive case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). Thus, it seeks to ensure that the topic of interest is well explored, and that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed through the results. The cases in the study include: dress code (set of rules governing what garment may be worn in a specific setting) and dress sense (the thinking or mindset that comes in as a reaction to certain dress) in the sampled secondary schools.

3.3 Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). From the study, the qualitative method was adopted for exploratory purposes. The methodology helped to find the different opinions from the head teachers, the teachers and the learners and assess subjectively attitudes, opinions and behaviour of the participants regarding teachers' dress and its effects.

The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically generated in the participants setting; data analysed inductively building from particulars or general themes; and the researcher interpreting the meaning of the data

(Creswell, 2009). Hence the study was concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data.

In addition, the qualitative research methodology was adopted in order to explore different perspectives on teachers' dress, to understand the meaning the participants have constructed from particular dress codes and to study and understand the participants' opinion and action regarding the teacher's dress code.

The data generated was based on empiric investigation and evidence using the qualitative research methodologies. As a result, a smaller sample size of 11 respondents was chosen in order to sort relevant in-depth information from the perspective of both groups (teachers and learners). The researcher therefore sought views from head teachers, teachers and learners concerning dress codes.

3.4 Sampling strategy, research sites and sample size

Purposive sampling, convenience sampling and stratified random sampling was used to select participants and schools for the study. A total sample of forty five (45) participants and four (4) schools were chosen for the study.

The schools for the study were purposively selected depending on their rules and regulations on dress code for the teachers. Given (2008: 562) defines purposive sampling as a process where participants are selected because they meet criteria that have been predetermined by the researcher as relevant to addressing the research question. Four schools, one school from Blantyre District and three schools from Zomba District were selected for the study. The school in Blantyre District was

selected because of its historical background on teacher's dress code. The three schools in Zomba District were chosen for convenience purposes since the researcher resides in Zomba District.

Key participants were selected from the various levels of education offices as follows: the Director of Policy and Planning at the Ministry Headquarters, School head teachers and teachers. According to Fast, Freeman, O'Neill and Rowley (2011: 42), "key participants are individuals in the research setting who you believe can offer important perspectives and insights into your research question." The Director of Policy and Planning and head teachers were purposively selected for the study. The Director of Policy and Planning was selected for the study because of the involvement in formulating policies and making major decisions in the education department. Head teachers were selected because they are the school administrators and act as figureheads for both the teachers and the learners hence they were considered to have important information for the study. In addition, head teachers act as the custodians of rules and regulations instituted by the Ministry of Education.

Teachers were selected for the study based on purposive sampling technique and convenience sampling technique. Two teachers (one male and one female) were selected for the study in order to have a representative of teachers from both sexes. Purposive sampling on one hand was done since preference was given to teachers who had taught at the designated school for at least one year. In addition, the teachers were chosen because they are concerned with implementing the Ministry of Education policies and teachers always interact with the learners at an individual level. Thus, teachers are in a better position to observe and understand the learners individually.

On the other hand, convenience sampling technique was done because most teachers were not available during the study since they were involved in invigilating the 2015 Malawi Examination Board (MANEB) national examinations. In convenience sampling, participants are selected because they are accessible and therefore relatively easy for the researcher to recruit (Given 2008: 562)

The selection of learners was based on stratified random sampling because of the distinct sub-groups in the population that needed to be represented. Stratified random sampling is a technique of selecting participants which divides the total population into separate subsets or strata before drawing random samples from each of these strata (Given 2008: 681). This accords every member of the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. Two male and two female learners' were selected from Forms 1 and 3 of each school. Form 2 and Form 4 learners were not included in the study since they were on holiday after writing Malawi Examination Board (MANEB), July 2015 Examinations. The learners were chosen in order to get their responses on how they feel and their views in association to different teacher dress behaviour.

3.5 Data generation methods and instruments

Data for the study were generated using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The interview guide and the focus group guide as data generation instruments were prepared in English. However, participants for the study were asked to choose between using English or a mixture of English and Chichewa as they wished in their responses to the questions.

3.5.1 Data generation methods

According to Given (2008: 192) “data generation is intended to represent the variety of ways in which the researcher, social world, and data interact in qualitative inquiry.” Given further states that data are not considered to be “out there” just waiting to be collected; rather, data are produced from their sources using qualitative research methods. In the current study, data was generated using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations.

3.5.1.1 In-depth interviews

According to Kumar (2005: 123), “an interview is a person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind.” Face to face interviews with the Director of Policy and Planning at the Ministry Head quarters, school head teachers and teachers were conducted. Semi structured interviews provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people’s personal perspectives for in-depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located and for very detailed subject coverage (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In the study, the semi structured interviews were used because of the open-ended nature of the questions, which provided an opportunity for both the interviewer and the participants to discuss some issues in the study with more detail. According to Fast, Freeman, O’Neill and Rowley (2011), open ended questions lead to other topics and ideas during the interviews that the researcher had not previously considered which might also be important for the study.

In addition, in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry

introduced by the interviewee (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher was able to use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further whenever they had difficulty answering a question. This helped both the researcher and the participant to clarify each other on the responses given.

The researcher also used interviews in order to consider not only what is being said, but who has said it and what specific motivations might influence them (Fast, Freeman, O'Neill & Rowley, 2011).

One of the challenges encountered during interviews was that some respondents had some expectations from the study in terms of what they were going to benefit from the study and if there were any incentives attached to the study. To deal with this challenge, the researcher did not lead the respondents to believing that a lot would be accomplished more than the researcher was able. The researcher therefore avoided creating too high expectations by telling the respondents that the information generated was for education purposes only.

3.5.1.2 Focus group discussions

Mixed focus group discussions with learners (eight learners; four male and four female learners' from Forms 1 and 3) were held in each school. According to the study, the term "mixed focus group discussions" was coined to refer to the manner in which the FDGs were conducted. From each school, the learners were not separated in the discussions. Thus both boys and girls participated in the same discussions. This was done because all the schools in the study were co-education secondary schools and the researcher thought it wise not to separate these learners since all the school

activities (teaching and learning) are done together without separating boys from girls. Focus groups help generate discussions among members and produce a variety of perspectives (Fast, Freeman, O'Neill & Rowley, 2011). The focus group discussions enabled the participants to talk freely and provide more information related to the study concerning their feelings and attitudes towards certain modes of teachers' dress. This helped the researcher to have multiple views during interaction with participants.

The major concern of the researchers was that a focus group discussion was a collectivistic rather than an individualistic research method that focused on the multimodality of participants' attitudes, experiences and beliefs (Madriz, 2000). One of the challenges experienced in the focus group discussion was that most learners were not free in expressing themselves. In order to gain participation of all learners in the focus group, the researcher asked the learners to speak comfortably in the group and asking for details and tactfully moving the discussions forward with everyone's participation.

3.5.1.3 Observations

Data generated using interviews were only limited to the experiences of the participants. In order to validate the participants' responses, observations were also conducted as a technique to check if the participants' behaviour (dressing) in the school was in line with what they said during interviews. Observations offer the opportunity to record and analyse behaviour and interactions as they occur (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place (Kumar, 2005). In all the schools the researcher visited, observations of what was happening in the schools

in relation to the subject under discussion was made. This was done in order to compare what was said by the participants with what was the actual reality on the ground. An observation of the teachers' and learners' dress code on school days was made. Observing the participants in their environment was more reliable and made it possible to see how the participants actually behaved. Observation serves as a technique for verifying or nullifying information provided in face to face encounters (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Observations also provided valuable background information about the environment where the study was being undertaken such as information about how people dress or about their non-verbal communication.

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003) observations allows events, actions and experiences to be seen through the eyes of the researcher often without any construction on the part of those involved. In the study, observations were conducted to uncover behaviour which the participants themselves did not know.

The researcher however, faced the problem of time constraints. The researcher had a short time to observe the learners and the teachers' dressing in the respective schools. The observations were therefore conducted on the day of booking appointments and on the actual day of generated data. In addition, the observations were done while the teachers and the learners were in their natural environment and they were not told that their dressing was being observed.

3.5.2 Data generation instruments

Data was generated using five different instruments. The instruments included; in-depth interview guide, focus group discussion guide, observation schedule, document analysis guide and audio visual materials. Justification have also been outlined on why a particular instrument was chosen for the study by stating the advantages each instrument had in the generation of data.

3.5.2.1 Interview guide

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted to generate data for questions i, ii, iii, iv and v of the specific research questions. An interview guide was developed for the head teachers on the concept of finding out if the school had a dress code, if the school implements the dress code among teachers, if the teachers follow the dress code recommended and what measures are taken if the schools dress code is not being followed.

A second interview guide was developed for the teachers. The guide sought to establish if the teachers knew they had a dress code, the role of a dress code in a school and to find out if the teachers followed or did not follow the schools dress code.

An interview guide was developed for the Director of Policy and Planning at the Ministry Headquarters to find out if there are some policies/rules and regulations concerning the code of conduct of teachers, with regard to dress. Interviews are susceptible to interview bias.

3.5.2.2 Focus group discussion guide

Focus group discussion guide were used to generate data for questions i, ii, iii and v of the specific research questions. A focus group discussion guide was prepared for discussions with the learners. The aim was to find out if learners could tell whether their teachers had a dress code or not, what learners thought is the appropriate mode of dress for teachers, how they felt when their teachers dressed differently from the schools' teachers' dress code or from what they expect, what experiences the learners had on their teachers' dress in their day-to-day interactions in the classroom and the experienced advantages and disadvantages of their teachers' dress code. The focus groups aided the participants to talk freely.

However, in focus groups, the discussion can be dominated or sidetracked by a few individuals. According to Given (2008), the moderator needs to keep control of the discussion session by making sure that the conversation stays focused on the research topic. Thus, if participants get off track, it is the duty of the researcher to pull the group back together. The researcher therefore encouraged all participants to speak their minds by developing rapport and giving every participant the chance to speak without fearing each other.

3.5.2.3 Observation checklist

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), observations are useful when the study concerns investigating a process involving several players where an understanding of non-verbal communication is likely to be important or where the behavioural consequences of events form a focal point of study. Observations were done on teachers dressing using a checklist to observe clothing, hair styles, shoes (colour and

type) and glooming. This was done to answer and generate data for questions i, ii and iii of the specific research questions. However, observations do not increase understanding of why people behave the way they do. In order to have more understanding on the participants behaviour, observations were supplemented with interviews and focus group discussions.

3.5.2.4 Document analysis guide

This involves the study of existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Written materials such as policy documents and codes of conduct were used to obtain valuable source of data. This tool helped generate data for questions i of the specific research questions. Document review may have shortfalls such as; information may be inapplicable, disorganised, unavailable or out of date. In the current study, documents having information on teachers' dress code were unavailable and outdated in most schools. However, efforts were made to find information on the internet and in some government offices to support the study.

3.5.2.5 Audiovisual materials

Photographs of different school events were used to collect and generate data for questions i and ii of the specific research questions. Photographs provided a good way of generating observable data on how teachers dress and their appearance during different school occasions.

3.6 Data management

According to Given (2008: 193), data management comprises “what to manage” and “how to manage it.” Given further states that data management is important because it ensures safe keeping or future proofing of data during the research process. All the interviews were transcribed in a note pad together with supplementary observations. This was done in order to reduce the risk of data loss, increased accuracy and verifiability of the original data from the field. Later, all the data were typed up and stored in memory sticks to provide back up. Computers offered a better way for longer term data preservation and increased the ability to reanalyse older data sets. All the participants’ names were coded in order not to have any trace of who said what in the interviews.

However, one best way of managing data is through the use of electronic software known as Super Hyper Qual (SHQ). According to Given (2008: 845), Super Hyper Qual is a computer programme that is used for qualitative data analysis and provide a means to manage the data after the data have been generated from the field. In this computer programme, text data is usually entered directly into the programme. Thus, the data are imported into the programme from external text files. After the text data are edited and documented, the resulting data set is ready for analysis. From this point forward, all manipulation of the data is done electronically. The programme handles interview data, observations, and research memos (Given, 2008).

3.7 Thematic data analysis

Thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis strategy by which qualitative data are segmented, categorised, summarised, and reconstructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set (Given, 2008). According to Patton and Cochran (2002), thematic analysis has four key stages. The first stage is to read and annotate a transcript which is the most basic stage. Here, the researcher does not provide an overview of the data, but makes preliminary observations.

Secondly, is the identification of themes. According to Ellis and Bochner (2000: 780) themes are abstract (and often fussy) constructs that researchers identify before, during and after data generation. The researcher looks in detail at the data to start identifying themes: summaries of ‘what is going on here.’ As the researcher looks through the data, a list of these themes are made.

Thirdly is the development of a coding scheme. These initial themes can now be gathered together to begin to develop a coding scheme. This is a list of all the themes, and the ‘codes’ that are applied to the data. It is useful to begin developing the coding scheme as soon as initial data has been collected.

Lastly, is coding the data. At this stage, the researcher starts applying these codes to the whole set of data, by either writing codes on the margins of transcripts or notes or (if using computer software) marking the text on line. Coding facilitates the development of themes, and the development of themes facilitates coding. In coding, portions of data are separated from their original context and labelled in some way so

that all data bearing the same label can be retrieved and inspected together (Given, 2008).

In this study, the researcher first of all arranged the data in order of the dates in which the interviews were held. Thus, the field notes, consent forms and interview guides were clearly labelled with school codes. The data was later transcribed from the interview scripts and all the field notes on observation on a computer and stored in a memory stick. The researcher then identified irregularities in the data and made connections in order to have a smooth flow of information from the data generated. Secondly, in preparation to develop themes from the data generated, the researcher engaged with the data through interactive reading, which helped the researcher to get familiarised with the data. The data was then grouped into major themes and sub or supporting themes. The emerging themes were later on supported with the theoretical framework and the available literature review in the results and discussion chapter of the study. Thirdly, the researcher started the actual process of coding the data. When coding the data, the researcher created categories from the existing data. All similar responses were grouped together and given codes depending on the research question the data was responding to.

In addition, schools and the respondents responses were coded. The schools were coded as centres 1, 2, 3 and 4 and all participants were coded using alphabetical letters except from the Director of Policy and Planning from the Ministry Headquarters. All materials that formed part of the project, such as signed consent forms and handwritten fieldwork notes were not disposed of after the end of the project since they were used to make references from and follow ups.

3.8 Issues of credibility and trustworthiness

Reliability, the process of developing and validating an instrument, is in large part focused on reducing error in the measurement process (Kimberlin & Winterstein 2008). Trustworthiness is the consistency and dependability of the data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In order to ensure reliability of the study and its results, the following strategies were adopted.

To achieve reliability, Given (2008) states that the study needs to carry the notion of dependability. To achieve dependability, the researcher lays out the procedures and data generation tools in such a way that others can attempt to generate data in similar conditions. The idea here is that if these similar conditions are applied, a similar explanation for the phenomenon should be found. The study adopted appropriate and well recognised research methods. Thus, the design allowed equal opportunity for all potential participants to be identified through random sampling, purposive sampling and convenience sampling in order to eliminate bias.

When generating data, several tools were used (interviews, observation and document schedules) to generate data and different respondents (head teachers, teachers and the learners) and four schools, were chosen in order to check the validity of the information generated. In addition, the field work was carried out consistently in such a way that the respondents were given sufficient opportunities to express their experience.

According to Given (2008), data needs to have confirmability in order to be trustworthy. He further states that in this notion, the study has to reflect the need to

ensure that the interpretations and findings match the data. The study adopted interactionism theory. All the respondents' responses were supported by the theory and were later supported with the available literature. Certain questions were paraphrased while asking for the same information so as to help ensure honesty in the participants.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research addresses the issue of application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful and to be fair (Sieber, 1993). The study did not hinder the respondents' studies nor compromise their duties. This was done by making prior arrangements for the interviews with the school when the learners had no classes to attend. The head teachers were also interviewed at a time when they were free and willing to participate in the study.

The participants' autonomy was respected. According to Fast, Freeman, O'Neill and Rowley (2011: 34), "autonomy refers to the ability of individuals to decide for themselves if they want to be part of the research and their ability to act on that decision." The participants had the right to form their own views concerning the subject matter and were allowed to express these views freely without being interrupted. In addition, the participants were allowed to opt out certain questions if they felt uncomfortable answering them.

Anonymity and confidentiality of participants were considered in the study. "Anonymity means the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 67). Confidentiality according to Given (2008)

means that information shared with researchers will not be disclosed in a way that can publicly identify a participant or source. The participants of the study were therefore asked not to reveal their names and the schools they were representing. Instead, the names of the schools and the participants were coded. The schools were coded as Centre 1, 2, 3 and 4. Head teachers were coded in alphabetical order as Head Teacher A for Centre 1, Head Teacher B for Centre 2, Head Teacher C for Centre 3 and Head Teacher D for Centre 4. Teachers who participated in the study were coded using letters E, F, G, H, I, J, K and L. All the learners who participated in the focus group discussions were also coded using alphabetical letters with the exception of letters A, B, C, and D.

3.9.1 Informed consent

Informed consent means providing the participants with information about the purpose of the study, how the data will be used and what participation will be required from them (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The first step in achieving informed consent was to inform the relevant authorities about the researcher's interest in conducting the research in their school. Therefore, head teachers were approached first and the research purpose and objectives of the research were explained to them. A copy of an introductory letter from the faculty and a copy of a permission letter from the Education Division were given to the respective schools. This was necessary in order to obtain formal permission and consent from the relevant authorities before the research began.

Everyone who participated in the study was well-informed about the study's aims and objectives. All participants in the study understood its purpose. The participants were

reassured that declining was not going to affect any services they were going to receive. The participants freely accepted to participate without being coerced or pressurised.

The participants were informed of the study and their role in it using the consent form, in English. Their verbal and written consent was sought before the interview and later they were asked to read the consent for themselves and sign to show agreement. When conducting the interviews, the respondents were told that the interview was going to be written down. Thus, the entire interview was transcribed in a note pad with the help of the research assistant and in the end the notes were compared to check if all the information was captured.

3.9.2 Access

Access in research requires the researcher being sensitive to the hierarchy or organisational structure: particularly getting clearance from senior people who are gatekeepers (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Prior to the study, a letter of introduction was sought from the Faculty of Education requesting access to the schools and offices selected to conduct the study. Later, permission was sought from the Education Division Offices to carry out the study in their institutions. Copies of both letters were made and taken to the schools for the school administrator's cooperation with the researcher on the preliminary visits as appointments to visit the institutions were being sought.

Furthermore, in the schools, the head teachers were approached first in order to make arrangements for the interviews with the different groups in the school. Ideally, this

was done to set the date and time with the respondent in advance of the interview. The head teachers were also asked to assist in organizing the various groups of participants at the school level.

3.9.3 Acceptance

Letters of support and affirmation on the study were sought from relevant authorities in order to be easily accepted in the study areas. Thus, an introductory letter was sought from the college department and letters granting permission from the Education Division offices were also sought. These letters were presented to the head teachers in the schools in order to gain acceptance for the study to take place.

The participants' informed consent was a critical condition for gaining access to them, in order to provide data for the study. When visiting the schools to book for appointments, each school's code of conduct for visitors was sought. First, the researcher booked appointments with the school's administrators. The appropriate dress code for the institutions was followed in order to gain acceptance.

3.9.4 Betrayal

Betrayal is "the intentional or unintentional breach of trust or the perception of such a breach" (Reina & Reina, 1999: 33). In other words, betrayal sends a bad message about how little one cares about, or values his or her relationship with, the betrayed partner. In the study, the researcher regarded the needs and conditions to carry out the study. Thus, all research protocols were followed in all the stages of the study. In addition, permission to conduct the study was sought in the schools where the study was to take place.

3.9.5 Deception

According to Patton and Cochran (2002) deception is the intentional misleading of subjects or the withholding of full information about the nature of a research experiment or procedure. That is, the researcher chooses to mislead or omit information on the purpose of the research, the role of the researcher, or what procedures in the study are actually experimental.

No information was withheld from the participants. In the study, information was written in the consent form which the respondents had access to before the interviews. Subjects were told during the interviews the aim of the study, the purpose and content of the research. The interviewees were also told that they were going to receive more information after the research was over. In addition, the interviewees were also assured that they could have access to the document once it was published.

The participants in the study were randomly sampled and convenience sampling. This helped to eliminate the possibilities of including individuals who pose as a participant, but whose behaviour in the study is actually part of the researcher's experimental design.

The study did not involve audio taping or videotaping of participants without their knowledge or prior consent. Instead, observations were made.

3.9.6 Beneficence

As applied to human subject research, beneficence refers to researchers' obligation to design and implement studies that promote the well-being of individuals and/or communities and reduce risks to a minimum (Fast, Freeman, O'Neill & Rowley, 2011). The researchers made every effort to minimise the risks of any harm to the participants. As such, names of participants and schools have been coded in order not to have any trace of any particular individual to avoid physical or psychological harm. All the required documents were sought and provided for from the academic institution as a way of confirming that the research was feasible. Participants especially the head teachers were given the researcher's contact details in the event of any issues arising relating to the study.

Interviews with the head teachers were conducted in their offices. For the learners, interviews were conducted in the classrooms and the library respectively to avoid disturbances and for privacy purposes. Only the learners who were chosen for the study were allowed to participate in the discussions. No teachers were present during the focus group discussions so that the learners were accorded the freedom to speak freely.

3.10 Locating the researcher into the study and role of the researcher

The researcher is a secondary school teacher in one of the mission schools. The role of the researcher is that of a facilitator to enable the interviewee to talk about their thoughts, feelings, views and experience (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher played the role of developing rapport with the participants. Thus, before starting the interviews, the interviewer established a friendly relationship with the respondent(s)

by introductions, in this case the researcher's full name was given, the aims of the interview and a reminder that the interview could stop at any time and allow time for questions.

Managing the interview process involves ensuring coverage of the agenda to be discussed within the interview, steering the interviewee back to topics when they stray (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher carried out the interviews with the participants by asking questions from the interview guide. All the responses were taken down by the researcher as the interviews were taking place. The researcher used probing techniques in order to help when the respondents did not understand the questions well and to seek more information.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the research methodologies designed to help the study take all the necessary steps to ensure that the research was of good quality. The methods used were discussed with reference to their advantages and disadvantages and how the researcher mitigated shortfalls. Each research method, design and tool was supported with relevant literature on the advantages and its implications in the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The broad themes emerged from the research questions and the emerging themes and issues from the analysed data formed the sub-themes and the basis for interpretation and discussion planning. In the analysis of the results, interactionism theory will also be used.

4.1 A brief description of the four schools

This description helps to understand the issues presented and discussed in this study. From the four schools selected, the school from Blantyre District was coded Centre 1 and the three schools from Zomba District were coded Centres 2, 3 and 4.

4.1.1 Centre 1

The school is located 20 kilometres from Blantyre City under South-West Education Division. The school is under the Malawi Defence Force (MDF) but its teachers are posted through MoEST. Learners selected to this school have to undergo entrance examinations.

4.1.2 Centre 2

The school is a government co-educational boarding school located 4 kilometres from Zomba City Centre. Though it is located within the urban area, the learners selected to this school come from the rural areas.

4.1.3 Centre 3

The school is an approved co-educational Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) located 3 kilometres from Zomba City Centre. Learners selected to the school come from Zomba Urban.

4.1.4 Centre 4

The school is an urban government co-educational boarding secondary school located 4 kilometres away from Zomba City Centre. Though the school is located within the urban area, the learners selected to this school come from the rural areas.

All the centres' were co-education secondary schools. In all these schools, MoEST played a part. Thus, all the education goals (procedures in teaching and learning and the curriculum) were guided by MoEST. However, the findings of the study revealed the difference in the personality of the learners selected to these schools. For example, some learners were selected from rural areas while some were selected from urban areas. This scenario predicted that in all these centres, learners were going to have varying responses and opinions towards teachers dress based on their background.

4.2 Overview of findings from the centre

The findings from the interviews and FGDs revealed that the sampled school (Centre 1) chosen in Blantyre District under South-West Education Divisions (SWED) followed both the dress code provided by the Ministry of Education and that of the Malawi Defence Force. Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that the sampled schools (Centres 2, 3 and 4) in Zomba District also followed the ‘dress codes’ for teachers provided by MoEST. All the three schools (Centres 2, 3 and 4) are located within the boundaries of Zomba City, in the South-East Education Division (SEED).

4.3 Perceived appropriate dress for teachers

Findings on perceived appropriate dress for teachers were based on what the schools viewed as acceptable dress in the school. Such dress included decent dressing, no trousers for ladies, clothes which do not display violence or sex, ladies and men’s suit and uniforms. In relation to interactionism theory, teachers dress acted as symbols which were context based and created through social interaction. The interactions between teachers and learners in schools are social behaviours made up of communication to which learners react to as a result causing a change in behaviour.

4.3.1 Centre 1

The findings from centre 1 revealed that teachers had two forms of prescribed dress. The teachers in this centre had a uniform and decent dressing as their prescribed dress.

4.3.1.1 Uniform and decent dressing

The findings from the observations in Centre 1 revealed that the head teacher wore a casual attire as defined by the school's ethics of dress code. Thus, he was not wearing a military uniform. He was in a decent short sleeved flowery shirt, a decent pair of black trousers and well-polished black flat shoes. In terms of grooming, he was not wearing a beard and he had short well combed hair.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the school had two sets of teachers. The first set was the military teachers and these went through military training and had educational training and qualifications such as a bachelor's degree in education. The second set was the civilian teachers and these did not go through military training but had educational training and qualifications such as a bachelor's degree in education.

The military teachers (both males and females) wore military uniforms (camouflage trousers and jacket and military boots). Although the teachers were also seen coming in the school campus wearing military barrettes and caps they never went to class in these. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

For our teachers here, they have to be in an army uniform. This comprises of boots, camouflage trousers and a camouflage jacket and it's a must that they have to dress like this always. When we go to perform other duties outside the school we put in civilian clothes but they are decent clothes. *"Ineyo mwandipeza mu civilian chifukwa ndikupangisa za mayeso ndiye sindili pa duty kunoko today."* (You have found me in civilian clothing because I am invigilating the MSCE exams and I am not on duty here at the school). (Interview with Head Teacher A: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

In agreement, the schools' male teacher said:

As long as I am performing official duties I am supposed to be in uniform. This entails that when coming to school I have to be in uniform always because the school is my duty station. There is no break of the uniform. We put it on from Monday to Friday and besides that all male teachers here are soldiers and you cannot report for duties in civilian clothing. We do not keep hair and a beard such that we shave almost on daily basis. When going to perform other duties outside the school we put on civilian like today I am going to host other activities outside the school. (Interview with Male Teacher E: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

In addition, the findings also revealed that the school only had two female civilian teachers. The female civilian teacher was in decent casual wear which comprised of a matching shirt and jacket, a blouse with prints on it and flat shoes. For her grooming, she had moderate makeup and had short well combed hair. Civilian teachers had a prescribed dress code too.

For those who are male civilian teachers they are to put on a jacket and a tie. "*Olo a ma teaching practice amaziwa kuti kunoko mode of dressing ndiya decent chifukwa we have our own mode of dressing ndiye iwowo sangavale uniform*" (For those coming for teaching practice they are also subjected to the same dressing as the civilian teachers. For female civilian teachers we do not allow mini-skirts, no dreadlocks, moderate make up). (Interview with Head Teacher A: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

For those teachers who are pending for military training they have to be in decent clothing for example, long sleeved shirts, suit or a jacket, black flat shoes, no earrings, no long hair and beard neatly pressed colour, jacket and no tight clothing. (Interview with Male Teacher E: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

For civilian teachers they can have all sorts of hair styles, decent cloths no specifics. (Interview with Female Teacher F: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

From the findings, the participant's responses revealed that all teachers in Centre 1 follow the prescribed dress code. The head teacher and the teacher mentioned several factors why the teachers follow the dress code. The mentioned factors are explained in the following excerpts:

All teachers follow the dress code because these rules are instituted from above and they form the ethics of the Malawi Defence Force. All the teachers who are soldiers put on the uniform when coming to work because they are soldiers and teachers at the same time. This has therefore formed part of the culture that has been built within the school and we do not need to reinforce the dress code because it has been there always once you join the profession. (Interview with Head Teacher A: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

Every one abides to these rules on the dress code because of the nature of our profession, for professional look and to show that we are soldiers "when doing my official duties, I do follow the dress code and when someone is in civilian clothes there is some sort of reluctance in the way you deliver your duties." (Interview with Male Teacher E: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

The foregoing responses concurred with the learners' responses below:

"Sitinaonepo aphunzisi athu atavala civilian akakhala mu casual imakhala ya decent." (It has never happened in the school that teachers come in an in appropriate dressing). *"Komanso maziphunzisi athu onse amuna ndi a chisilikali ndiye amayenela kuvala uniform akamabwela kuntchito"* (and besides that all our male teachers are soldiers so they

have to be in uniform always when they are coming for work). (Male Learner S: FGD Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

In another opinion, when one teacher was asked to explain why the dress code for the school was followed the response was:

“I do follow the dress code because there are only two civilian female teachers at the school and I am like a different person all together so if I can put on my own mode and style of dressing I will be attracting most of the attention from the learners . Besides that, I am comfortable putting on decent cloths because it was part of my training when I was in college, our lectures used to say a teacher is supposed to dress like this not like that...” (Interview with Female Teacher F: Centre 1,2 July, 2015)

4.3.2 Centre 2

The findings from Centre 2 revealed that teachers only had one form of prescribed dress. The teachers in this centre had decent dress as their prescribed dress. However, the findings from the observations in Centre 2 indicated different modes of dressing among the teachers.

4.3.2.1 Decent dressing

As observed from Centre 2, the schools’ head teacher was in a neck tie, well ironed short sleeved shirt with a waistcoat on top and well-polished black shoes. For his grooming, it was observed that the head teacher was not wearing a beard and he had well combed short hair.

The findings further revealed that teachers were seen in different attires for example, the female teacher was putting on a skirt below her knees and a sweater on top and she had plastic shoes on her feet. For her grooming, she had no makeup and had short well combed hair.

The recommended dress code for the school included decent wear. When asked to explain what was meant by ‘decent wear’ this is what the head teacher explained:

A teacher should be dressed decently when coming to school. I do not expect the teacher to put on a pair of trousers especially for the ladies, no jeans are allowed, slip-ons and even golf shirts those are not allowed here. For the male teachers they at least have to be in a neck tie and should not keep long beards. (Interview with Head Teacher B: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

The study also revealed similar findings from the teachers.

For female teachers, a pair of trousers is not allowed, we are also not expected to have dreadlocks, make up should be at least moderate, mini-skirts, see through blouses and blouses which reveal the breasts are not allowed here.(Interview with Female Teacher H: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

For us male teachers we must at least have to be in a jacket and a neck tie thought I don’t like putting it on and should not keep long beards and an afro. Jeans, bare muscle shirts, slip-ons and even golf shirts are not entertained in the teaching area. (Interview with Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

The teachers explained in the interview that they do not always go to work in the appropriate dress.

Not everyone comes here with the appropriate dress code. As for me, I only dress properly when I am having a class to teach on that day but if I am not going to class I can put on anything I want.” (Interview with Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

We have expressions such as “*lero ndiye mwajombatu*” today you are absent, “*mwatijenjeza*” you have exaggerated your dressing, to show that one has overdressed or are inappropriately dressed. (Interview with Male G and Female Teacher H: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

Furthermore, in this Centre, it was found that most male teachers were seen not putting on neck ties whilst some had their neckties on, some were in decent clothing (jacket, decent shirts and a pair of decent trousers) some were not and others were putting on sports shoes. When the head teacher and the teachers were asked to explain why some teachers did not follow the dress code this is what they had to say:

The newly qualified teachers come to school with college life of dressing which does not fit in the school. (Interview with Head Teacher B: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

Some of the male teachers do not like the dress code. We are not used to the dress code because we all come from different colleges. (Interview with Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

To prove this, the learners were asked to mention some modes of dressing they had seen their teachers in which was not appropriate for the classroom and this is what the learners’ had to say:

Yes, our teachers sometimes they do come here dressed as if they are going for a fashion show. They come in jeans, golf shirts, tight trousers popularly known as *ung’onoung’ono*, they have weird haircuts; they put on clothes inside which end up sticking outside their clothes. They

do come in mini-skirts, they put on tight clothes which sometimes show their waist and they have weird haircuts. (Male Learners O: FGD Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

4.3.3 Centre 3

The findings from Centre 3 revealed that teachers had one form of prescribed dress. The teachers in this centre had decent dress as their prescribed dress. However, the evidence from the observation in Centre 3 showed that the teachers had different modes of dressing.

4.3.3.1 Decent dressing

In Centre 3, it was observed that the head teacher of the school was in a neck tie, well ironed long sleeved shirt and well-polished black shoes. For his grooming, he was not wearing a beard and he had well combed short hair.

I interacted with and interviewed one female teacher from the school but had the opportunity to observe more female teachers from the school. The female teacher was putting on a dress below her knees with a decent ladies' jacket on top and she had open shoes on her feet. For her grooming, she had no makeup and had short well combed hair.

Some female teachers were wearing mini-skirts with long slits, some had skirts below the knees, some had long hair and one lady teacher was putting on black high waist socks. The male teacher was not wearing neck tie, he was wearing a decent shirt and a decent pair of trousers with a pair of black shoes. For his grooming, he was not wearing long beards and he had well combed short hair.

The findings revealed that the recommended dress code for teachers include decent dressing, clothes wording acceptable language, neatness and inappropriate dress.

A teacher should be dressed as a teacher not like some vendor in town. For male teachers they should be in decent not in casual. They don't have to wear jean trousers when coming to school. Both male and female teachers should not wear slip-ons, golf shirts, and blouses with obscene language like, not torn or dirty clothes. Male teachers under any circumstance should not plait their hair or have dreads; they can sometimes have a pair of suit or at least have a jacket to look smart. No mini-skirts are allowed here. Ladies can have a decent dress or ladies suit which should cover the knees. (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

A female teacher in this school is not allowed to put on a pair of trousers, mini-skirts, see through blouses, bare backs and blouses which reveal the breasts and tight clothes are not allowed here. As for male teachers they must be in decent clothing such as a suit or a jacket and a neck tie thought and not in casual such as jeans, bare muscle shirts, slip-ons and even golf shirts. (Interview with Male Teacher I: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

Not all teachers followed the dress code for the schools. The head teacher pointed out that a few teachers come to school well-dressed while others do not do so.

Some teachers do not follow the dress code for example, there are some situations when a teacher sees that he or she has no lesson they decide to dress the way they want. (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

Several factors such as principles and conventions were mentioned as to why the teachers chose to follow and not to follow the dress code. When asked to explain why they did not follow the dress code for the school, the teachers explained that:

Sometimes, newly qualified teachers dress the way they feel because of their college life for example the college which they were trained. (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3,30 July, 2015)

In addition, one teacher in the same centre explained that:

“When I was in college during Kamuzu era, we were given a booklet describing what a teacher should wear and not what to wear and our mode of dressing was the British standards a polished shoe, for ladies the skirt was supposed to be below the knees decent trouser and a neck tie and this was also part of your grade during the teaching practice but because of the freedoms which have come nowadays the dress code has been reduced. This was part of my training because during Kamuzu time, a teacher would not dare come to school *atavala zakezake aphuzisi amuna ndiye amabwenedwa akapanda kuvala tie*”When I first started working here, most of the teachers were trained during Kamuzu era and everything was done in the Kamuzu way but when this younger generation especially the newly graduates started coming into the profession things started changing male teachers started wearing tight shirts popularly known as *ung'onoung'ono*, sagging and mini-skirts with long slits and they are only a few of them who course such dressing problems.(Interview with Female Teacher J: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

4.3.4 Centre 4

The findings from centre 4 revealed that teachers had one form of prescribed dress. The teachers in this centre had decent dress as their prescribed dress. However,

findings from the observations revealed different modes of dressing among the teachers.

4.3.4.1 Decent dressing

In Centre 4, the schools head teacher was not available since he was out conducting other duties. The deputy head teacher stood in for the head teacher. The deputy head teacher for the school was a lady.

It was observed that the deputy head teacher was putting on a decent ladies' suit and closed black medium heeled shoes. For her grooming, it was found out that she had no makeup, had well combed short hair and was not putting on earrings. Furthermore, it was revealed that the female teacher was putting on a dress below her knees with a jacket on top and she had open shoes on her feet. For her grooming, she had no makeup and had long combed hair.

However, the findings also revealed that some female teachers were putting on mini-skirts with long slits, some had skirts below the knees and some had different hair styles such as long hair, short hair, tinted hair and a bob cut. One lady teacher was in her religious clothing known as Hijab representing her Muslim faith. The male teacher was not putting on neck tie; he was putting on a decent shirt with a jacket on top and a decent pair of trousers with a pair of black shoes. For his grooming, he was not wearing a beard and he had well combed short hair.

On one hand, the study found out that some male teachers were putting on decent clothing which included a neck tie, a formal pair of trousers, a neatly pressed shirt and

black flat shoes. On the other hand, some male teachers had no neck ties and some were putting on tight trousers. In terms of grooming some male teachers had short hair while some had an afro, some kept a beard and some kept no beard.

Teachers should be decently dressed, no mini-skirts or dresses and no casual wear though not well prescribed due to democratic values. (Interview with Head Teacher D: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

For female teachers, a pair of trousers is not allowed, we are also not expected to have dreadlocks, make up should be at least moderate, mini-skirts, see through blouses and blouses which reveal the breasts are not allowed here. (Interview with Female Teacher L: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

For us male teachers we must at least have to be in a jacket and a neck tie though I don't like putting it on and should not keep long beards and an afro. Jeans, bare muscle shirts, slip-ons and even golf shirts are not entertained in the teaching area. (Interview with Male Teacher K: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

The study revealed that several factors were mentioned why the teachers chose to follow and not to follow the dress code. When the teachers were asked to explain why they did not follow the dress code for the school, one teacher explained that:

We haven't been told on the dress code of the school but the reaction we get when we are dressed in certain clothes shows that that cloth is not allowed and most of the times it's the division office which emphasises on the dress code when they come to visit our school. A Education Division Manager (EDM) *akabwela kuzayendela amayilimbikila nkhani imeneyo ya dressing komaso sikuti a deputy zimawakhuza kwenikweni za dressing koma a head amakhala nazo serious* (When the EDM comes for inspection he likes to emphasise on the issues of dressing and our head teacher is serious on the issue but

for the deputy head teacher is a bit flexible on the issue). (Interview with Female Teacher L: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

At times of course especially with young teachers who would opt not to look like people of the older generation claiming that putting on a neck tie is not for them but for old people and wearing jeans and t-shirts is for them when it is against the profession roles. (Interview with Head Teacher D: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

We want to go along with fashion and this forms part of having fun at work. (Interview with Female Teacher L: Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

The study found out that the head teachers and the teachers had divided opinions over the value of following the prescribed dress code in the schools. On one hand, the head teachers responded favourably to following the prescribed dress in the respective schools. Common good for the learners and saving face were some reasons cited by the head teachers for their dress code. On the other hand, teachers' attitudes towards dress varied from one teacher to another. Teachers preferred different modes of dress due to their personal interests.

In the sampled centres, it was observed that Centre 1 was different from all other Centre's. The study found that there was a special uniform for a specific group of teachers teaching at the school which had to be worn all the times. According to the school ethics, as long as the teachers are on the school campus, the dress code had to be followed at all cost. These results can be compared to the findings of Sartori, Bauske and Lunenburg (2000) who conducted a study in military and public secondary schools. The teacher's dress code in a military school was an army uniform

which was unvaried and colourless in which the uniform suggested standardization, regimentation, and impersonal relationships with learners. If two parties interpret meanings in the way in which they are intended to be interpreted, effective and mutual communication occurs. In view of the above findings, communication is not disrupted because all teachers follow the prescribed dress code. Interactionism therefore enables participants to understand at what juncture in the interpretive process interaction can be disrupted or misinterpreted.

From all the four centres', decent and modest dress was allowed for both male and female teachers on campus. The decent mode of dressing for males included a neck tie, jacket or a suit, formal pair of trousers, no body piercing, and short well combed hair, flat black/ brown well-polished shoes and a decent long sleeved or short sleeved shirt. For the female teachers, modest and decent dressing included ladies suit, moderate make up, skirts or dresses below the knee, no pair of trousers and no long slits. These findings corroborate the findings from the study conducted by Wood and Dickson (2011) who found out that modest dressing in schools was concerned with dresses, shirts and blouses with sleeves, shirts that cover below the waist, skirts which cover the knees, suits and a dress or shirt with a jacket on top.

For Centre 1, decent dressing was for specific teachers and for specific events as the head teacher and the teachers explained. This phenomenon corresponds with the interactionism theory which states that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them. The school had “symbols” and

“signs” which were conveyed through dress. These “symbols” and “signs” signified difference in status, duties and roles as stipulated in the schools code of conduct.

An interview with the Director of Policy and Planning revealed that every government school has a teacher’s dress code. This is so because all teachers are civil servants and all civil servants abide by the rules indicated in the MPSR. Specifically, for teachers, they have a teacher’s hand book where all the rules and regulations of those working in the teaching profession have to follow. It was further stated that the dress code is very much reinforced in almost all the teachers training institutions and in the universities, the Faculty of Education reinforces the mode of dressing in the teachers.

On the whole, teachers from Centre’s 2, 3 and 4 mentioned that since they started teaching in the school, they had neither seen the Ministry of Education’s teachers’ dress code nor the schools teachers’ dress code. The teachers explained that they were only told what to wear and what not to wear to school. In addition, the teachers motioned that from the way they are treated and the comments they receive from fellow teachers and the head teacher suggests that certain types of clothes are not allowed in the school. On the other hand, a teacher from Centre 1 mentioned that from the way she observed the school culture, it indicated to her that certain types of clothes are not allowed in the school. This scenario therefore reveals that there exists a silent language which is built up within the school setting through social interaction among the teachers.

In relation to the study theory, interactionism states that social participants in a social situation are constantly negotiating a shared definition of the situation, taking one

another's viewpoints into account, and interpreting each other's behaviour prior to implementing an action. Interpretations from the study findings were drawn from the traditions, customs and interactions of the teachers and the learners in their respective schools with prior knowledge from societies' point of view on teachers dress.

4.4 Perceived appropriate dress code for teachers: Summary

From the findings, the perceived appropriate dress for teachers include a neck tie, decent men's suit, well polished shoes, short and long sleeved shirts. For female teachers, no trousers are recommended, ladies suit, knee high dresses and skirts. The findings concur with Wood and Dickson (2011) who state that modest dress in schools is considered to be dresses, shirts and blouses with sleeves, shirts that cover below the waist, skirts which cover the knees, suits or a dress or shirt with a jacket on top.

4.5 Impact of teachers' dress code on learners' learning experience

The findings from the interviews and the observations revealed different modes of dressing among the teachers despite having the prescribed dress code provided by the school. However, the head teachers encouraged teachers to dress in professional clothes by providing reminders and counselling sessions for the teachers if seen in unprofessional attire.

4.5.1 Role modelling

The findings revealed that the learners emulate what their teachers do. For instance, learners emulate the good behaviour of their teachers as a result, the teacher acts as a

role model. Learners look up to their teachers as role models. The following are the explanations from the teachers:

When a teacher is well dressed he or she acts as a role model. A number of learners' have come to tell me that I am their role model. (Interview with Female Teacher F: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

It is assumed that teachers are role models for the learners' and learners' should emulate from the teachers. Learners' will not be inspired to join the teaching career if teachers do not dress properly. The career becomes unattractive to them because they start associating you with careers which they think are not rewarding in life. (Interview with Female Teacher H: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

For learners' who are opting for the profession, it acts as an inspiration to them. The way a teacher dresses also acts as a motivation and passion to join the career. Here at our school, learners' imitate what you do they fold their school jerseys the way how soldiers fold theirs even the way they dress during weekends they put on camouflage cloths such that we have to snatch the clothes when we see the learners in one and those who do not have a camouflage feel inferior and end up buying one. (Interview with Male Teacher E: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

This was also echoed by learners in their group discussions:

Aphunzisi akavala mozilemekeza amatipasa chisanzo chabwino cham'mene munthu wachikulile ayenela kubvalila (when a teacher is well dressed they portray a good example towards us on how one ought to dress. (Female Student E: FGD Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

Teachers are like our role models *moti timawapanga* admire *makamaka agavala bwino osati kuvala ngati* vendor *winawake* (Teachers are like our role models such that we admire them especially when they are well dressed not dressing like a vendor). (Male Student F: FGD Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

The interview with the Director of Policy and Planning revealed the same reasons as to why teachers must be in their professional dress code. For example, she cited three points on the importance of teachers being in their dress code when going to work.

Teachers are teaching the younger generation and in course of that they are moulding their behaviour. Teachers' dress code also incites discipline among the learners. (Interview with Director of Policy and Planning, 2 July, 2015)

In addition, the Director of Policy and Planning stated that it is the duty of each and every school to reinforce the teachers' dress code as a way of safe guarding the professions code of conduct. Such a responsibility is usually left with the head teachers in the schools.

The learners emulate the good behaviour of the teacher and get inspired and motivated and later develop the passion to join the career. This is also stated by Lockwood (2006) who states that by identifying with an outstanding role model, individuals can become inspired to pursue similar achievements.

The findings above concur with the findings in a study by Ifideli and Ifideli who state that decency, reputation and character formation are also other benefits of dress code. Educators create favourable impressions on learners' or learners by presenting themselves in professional or appropriate attire. From the teachers dressing, learners

may or may not develop the love and passion to join the same career path. Thus, learners get impressed with the dressing of the teachers and eventually get the learners inspired and motivated and later develop the passion to join the teaching career.

Furthermore, the findings above corroborate Hall and Bernardino's (2006) findings that faculty members make lasting impressions on their learners through their appearance, specifically their dress/attire, which contributes largely to a positive or negative perception. In addition, the interactionism theory states that through social interactions, meanings are constantly defined and redefined within the society. The change in the learners' opinions and perceptions therefore form different meanings both directly and indirectly towards the teachers dress.

4.5.2 Moral decay /Discipline

On the other hand, the study discovered that teachers' dress had a negative impact on learners. The interview with the head teacher for Centre 4 revealed that it was difficult to control learner's improper dressing for those taking after some teacher's bad mode of dressing. It was also revealed that it became difficult to discipline the learners because they justified their dressing whilst referring to their teacher's mode of dressing. This scenario was also present in the other schools and the head teachers and teachers from the other schools indicated that:

“School girls are always moving with fashion and when they see their teachers dress inappropriately they think its fashion and they also cut their skirts short and become more concerned with how to look good instead of concentrating on their studies.” (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

The learners' imitate what you do. There was a male teacher *amene amakonda kukwefula ndiye zinapezeka kuti ana ambili anyamata anayamba kumakwefula and nthawi inayake ndili m' class I told a boy to tuck in his shirt and anandiyankha kuti "sir inunsotu simunapisile."* There was a male teacher who used to wear his trousers below the waist and it happened that most of the male learners' started to wear their uniform below the waist and this other time and one day when I was in class, I told a boy to tuck in his shirt and he answered me back saying "sir you too haven't tucked in. (Interview with Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

This was also echoed by a teacher from Centre 3:

The learners' imitate what you do there was a male teacher who used to *kukwefula ndiye zinapezeka kuti ana onse anyamata anayamba kukwefula*(dress the trousers below the waist and most boys started to dress in the same manner)and for the female learners they went to cut their skirts short and started putting on black stockings like the teachers they admired. (Interview with Female Teacher J: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

The findings further showed that in some instances, teachers' dressing caused confusion to the learners on the roles of their teachers.

In the case of newly qualified teachers, they come to school with college life of dressing which does not fit in the school in such situations, learners are misguided, confused and are put off during lessons as a result learners' lose interest in concentration during lessons. (Interview with Head Teacher B: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

4.5.3 Distractions during lessons

The study revealed that dressing would act as a visual distracter. Both teachers and learners explained that for males they are psychologically distracted due to their biological nature. This was usually the case whenever the teachers dressed improperly the learners concentrated on looking at what the teacher was wearing. This is what the teachers had to say:

Somehow it acts as a distraction to the learners. In my case since I am the odd one out, learners pay much attention to how and what I am putting on and start making comparisons on what clothes have I repeated and which ones look good on me. (Interview with Female Teacher F: Centre 1, 2 July, 2015)

When teachers are dressed in appropriately, learners start observing how the teacher is dressed. (Interview with Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

If a female teacher is not dressed properly, it becomes distractive especially to the male learners. (Interview with Female Teacher H: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

A teacher from Centre 3 also echoed that it causes a lot of distraction to male learners if a female teacher is not dressed properly.

It becomes distractive psychologically especially to the male learners'. (Interview with Female Teacher J: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

Furthermore, the findings show that once learners noticed that their teachers were dressed inappropriately; this gave the learners something to do other than paying attention to the lesson. The learners would usually start discussing the teacher's

clothes where it has gone wrong while the lesson was in progress. This kind of attitude demotivates the learners' attention in class. Both teachers and learners explained particular incidents when classes were literally disturbed in their school because of how the teacher dressed on a particular day.

Classes get disturbed there was a young teacher who reported to work in a mini-skirt. When she went to class, the learners' started to boo that teacher such that she had to leave the classroom and did not teach on that day. (Interview with Female Teacher H and Male Teacher G: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

One day our teacher came to class not well dressed, we started to giggle and laugh. Some of our friends were not aware of what was happening so they started asking what we were laughing at and we told them and the class started to discuss the teacher's clothes while the lesson was in progress. (Female Learner N: FDG Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

The learners continued to explain:

We do this often and if a teacher gets annoyed with the whisper and the laughing they start sending those caught laughing out of the class and some naughty student's just start to walk out of the class in reaction to what the teacher has done. (Female Learner Q: FDG Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

The findings suggest that learner's behaviour is usually a reaction and a result of their teacher's behaviour. Several teachers' behaviour caused the learners to react to them in different ways. The way teachers behave causes his or her learners to respect them or disrespect them and sometimes treating the teachers as equals. In their study, Weber and Mitchell's (2004), analysis from teachers' comments suggested that to

many, clothing is not only a means of identifying oneself as teacher, but is also a pedagogical strategy in itself, a means of commanding respect and order, of establishing a serious working atmosphere, and of exerting control.

Teachers are respected individuals in the society. They are entrusted with the duty of moulding young people into good citizens. As explained by the head teacher in Centre 3, moral decay in the school has grown considerably because teachers are no longer respected by their own learners'. This is the case because the teachers show parts of their bodies to learners which is not supposed to be the case considering the teachers role in the school. Similar findings were reported by Ifideli and Ifideli (2013), who stated that in academic circles any form of official dress code has some advantages which include: instilling discipline in the learners'; helping to preserve moral standard by lowering sexual abuse and harassment; creating less distraction to both the learners' and the teachers; the much expected classroom order is made possible by helping the student to concentrate in his or her academic work, it shows sense of responsibility on the part of the learners'.

It was also discovered from the interviews that not only did the learners get disturbed by the teachers' dressing; teachers too get distracted by their own mode of dressing. At times, the teachers themselves get busy with their clothes, for example, they constantly pull down their blouse and skirt if it is short and they hold up their skirts or dresses if they are too long for fear of stepping on them and falling down in the classroom. A learner narrates:

It becomes disturbing to us because the teacher keeps on pulling down the skirt or blouse if it's too short in course of doing that, we become conscious and start to whisper to each other. *Nthawizina, chifukwa*

choti malaya amene aphuzinsi avala ndi a fupi kapena avala nsapato yayitali amangoyima malo amozimozi osamatiyendela kuti awone zimene tikupanga mpaka period yonse imatha. (Sometimes because the teacher is putting on a mini-skirt and high heels, she does not feel comfortable as a result she just stands on the same place without monitoring us in our row to see what we are doing until the lesson finishes). (Male Learner V: FDG Centre 4, 29 July, 2015)

Mphuzisi wankazi akakhala kuti sanavale bwino akaflasha timachita manyazi ndifeyo chifukwa amakhala ngati wativula ifeyo. Mmalo moti umvesele umaganizila za iwowo kuti mmene amachoka kwawoko amaganiza chain (When a female teacher is dressed inappropriately by showing the cleavage we get embarrassed and we feel so uncomfortable learning because it's like she has undressed us. Instead of concentrating you start to wonder about what she was thinking in order to decide to dress in that manner). (Female Student W: FGD Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

The teachers also get disturbed psychologically when they get reaction from the learners and fellow teachers concerning their dressing. This is what the head teacher had to comment on the matter:

In the past I used to send some teachers back home to go and dress properly. You can imagine if I send that teacher back home will they return comfortably and teach as they had prepared before? Some never returned after sending them back home. This is a loss to our learners because they come to learn here and a teacher is supposed to be in a good mood in order to deliver the lesson properly. (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

For the learners, this is what they commented on the matter:

The teacher also gets disturbed. *Zimapezeka kuti inuyo mukungoseka nkumayankhula cha pansipansi aphunzisi aja akatembenuka nonse kusiya kuyankhula nkumakhala ngati mukumvesela ndiyeno amagwa mphwayi pena amangokalipa ndiye moti lesson ija aphunzise m'mene anakonzekela mood ija imasintha and zimakhalanso ngati lesson ija yalowano zibwana kwa ifeyo ngati ana chifukwano timayamba kusekano kwambili.* You find that learners are just laughing and whispering to each other on the teachers dressing and when the teacher turns round to see what is going on we all stop doing that and pretend that we are paying attention so the teacher becomes frustrated sometimes the teacher starts yelling at us and instead of the teacher continuing to teach the way he/she prepared the lesson, the mood changes and the seriousness then goes away and we begin to do the laughing more openly. (Male Learner M: FDG Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

The head teacher in Centre 3 mentioned that the body parts of a teacher such as the waist, breasts, arm pits, the chest and thighs are not supposed to be shown to the learners. It was difficult to discipline the learners' improper dressing because the learners justified their dressing whilst referring to their teacher's mode of dressing.

On the impact of dressing, we are moving away from our culture such that teachers put on whatever they want but they forget that they have an impact on the learner too and most of the times we have problems with the female teachers because they put on revealing clothes, clothes which show parts of their bodies, which are not supposed to be shown outside and on the male teachers the problem is only faced when it comes to the dressing styles” When a female teacher is putting on a mini-skirt it is disturbing especially to the male student because they get interested in looking at the teachers legs and imaging how it looks like if you go further up. (Interview with Head Teacher C: Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

Zimapezeka kuti aphunzisi aja sanavale bwino and amatipanga attract ma feelings athu ndiye poti ndiwe mwana wa sukulu sungawauze kuti simunavale bwino komanso sungawa vaile aphunzisi ndiye umangopeza mwana wa school nzako kuti zithele mwaiyeyo koma anayambisa ndi a madam mu class. (It happens that the teacher is not well dressed and we cannot tell them that you haven't dressed well and this dressing arouses our sexual feelings and because we are just learners' we cannot ask out our teacher and we end up having an affair with a fellow student to relieve ourselves of the sexual desire but when in actual sense it was the madam who started it). (Male Student U: FGD Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

Mphuzisi wa nkazi akakhala kuti sanavale bwino timachita manyazi ndifeyo chifukwa amakhala ngati wativula ifeyo. When a female teacher is dressed inappropriately we get embarrassed and we feel so uncomfortable learning because its like she has undressed us. (Female Student V: FGD Centre 3, 30 July, 2015)

The findings revealed that when learners see these body parts of their teachers they think that the teacher is no longer worth respecting and listening to. This later on attracts unnecessary behaviour from the learners.

Discipline problems arise for example, one lady teacher came in a mini-skirt and learners booed her and she failed to teach the class. (Interview with Head Teacher B: Centre 2, 25 July, 2015)

From the above findings, head teachers, teachers and learners in all the centres cited both positive and negative effects of teachers dress on learners. From the responses, the main issue was that learners as well as fellow teachers are quick to evaluate teachers dress other than learners dress because of the roles teachers have in education as well as in society.

From the study discussions, the teachers and the learners talked about the issue of disturbance caused during lessons at length. Disturbances were explained in form of taking away the learners focus physically and psychologically. From the findings, head teachers, teachers and learners stated that some teachers came to school dressed in flip-flops, see through blouses, t-shirts, mini-skirts and jeans which caused distractions during lessons. These findings concur with Ifideli and Ifideli (2013) who state that the mode of dressing which cause disruption and distraction includes: trousers and skirts worn below the waist (popularly known as sagging or *kukhwefula*), low neck blouses exposing the breasts and chest; skirts with slit above the knees; see through dresses, shirts and blouses; clothes printed with offensive or obscene wordings; revealing attires mini-skirts; bathroom slippers, worn out shoes and shirts; clothing including T-shirts which displays sex, violence, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, death, gang or hate and slogans or picture; tight trousers, shirts, dresses or skirts, boggy trousers; non-natural coloured hair, hats, caps, sunglasses, body piercing jewellery except the ears for women; chains, hand bands, tattoos and noisy shoe heels. It should be noted that learners too may dress in this form of dressing and the disruptions may as well apply to them.

From the findings, teachers' dress can elicit some other form of behaviours among the learners due to the interpretations the learners make out of the teachers dressing. The behaviour can either be positive or negative depending on how the learners perceive the appropriateness of the dressing. A study by Underwood, Kenner, and McCune (2002), suggests that an individual's appearance is essentially non-verbal communication and influences the perception and validity of the spoken word. Thus, according to Reece and Walker (2003) style of dress can enhance or inhibit your

relationship and hence your communication with the learners. This therefore suggests that teachers fail to create a conducive environment for learning because the clothes also play a part in controlling learning and communication between teachers and learners.

4.6 Whether teachers follow the dress code

Data from the above specific research objective was generated using two research questions. The research questions were as follows: Do teachers follow the prescribed dress code? What makes the teachers follow/ or not follow the prescribed dress code? From the respondents' views, some similarities and differences existed from one school to another on how teachers complied with the schools' dress code. From their responses, four themes emerged. The themes are as follows:

4.6.1 Professionalism

From all the schools (Centre 1, 2, 3 and 4), the study found out that the head teachers acknowledged that teaching as a profession has its own mode of dress. The head teachers stated that according to the rules, regulations and ethics of the teaching profession, all teachers must follow the prescribed dress code no matter what. They also went further stating examples of why teachers should dress in that particular manner saying that teachers are like role models to the learners and their mode of dressing has an impact on the way how the learners perceive their education.

From Centre 1, it was found out that the head teacher, teachers and learners stated that it has never happened that a teacher came to school not dressed in the professional dress code. These findings concur with a study by Sartori, Bauske and Lunenburg

(2000) who discovered that military secondary schools by their very nature reinforce status differentiation between student and teacher. This shows that the teachers are fully aware of what is expected of them as far as the school dressing is concerned. The learners' too know exactly what behaviour is expected from their teachers in terms of dressing.

4.6.2 Preference

In Centre's 2, 3 and 4, the study found out that the teacher did not completely follow the teacher's dress code. Some teachers opt to follow and not to follow the dress code because of their personal choices. Several factors were mentioned why the teachers choice to follow and not to follow the dress code. When the head teachers were asked why most of their teachers never followed the dress code, they were quick to point out that most teachers fail to understand the ethics of their profession. The teachers put in their personal interest whilst ignoring the professional standards of dressing. As a result of this, the head teachers have to give the teachers constant reminders on the code of dressing and sometimes offer guidance and counselling to the teachers who do not comply. This is verified in the interactionism theory which regards meaning as being subjective. Thus, each individual has their own interpretation towards various modes of dress hence the difference in dress.

From the above findings Centre's 2, 3 and 4, the teachers' behaviour as regards to dressing does not go in line with the Malawi Civil Service Code of Conduct. The Malawi Civil Service Code of Conduct states that public officers also have a duty to treat the public and their colleagues with courtesy and respect. They shall therefore not cause embarrassment to colleagues or members of the public by their dress,

speech or behaviour. Maintain personal hygiene, dress in respectable attire in accordance with the acceptable norms of the office (Malawi Public Service, 2009). As regards teaching, it is further guided and supported with some professional guidelines forming some principles towards teaching. The teachers' handbook states that "in the exercise of his or her duties, a teacher shall display professionalism through conforming to the code of dress as accepted in the profession" (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2008).

4.6.3 Training institutions

In all the schools (Centre 1, 2, 3 and 4) visited, the study found out that the head teachers were much older than most of the teachers teaching in the school. From the head teachers' explanations in Centre 2 and 3, most of the times, they have problems with female teachers and the younger teachers more especially those coming fresh from college. The head teachers indicated that newly qualified teachers have their own dressing which they feel is appropriate and some do this in order to show the age difference between the older generation (especially older teachers) and the new generation (the younger teachers). Thus, they opt not to look like the teachers of the older generation and so they dress differently and this is usually in contrast to the schools' dress code. The head teachers in Centre 2, 3 and 4 expressed this scenario with a lot of worry because the teachers' habits became a source of conflicts among members of staff. Some teachers also indicated that the years in which they received their training and the environment in which they were raised up was a contributing factor to the way they dressed. This was explained by referring to how things were back then and how things were done in the past during the one party era both at community level and in the various education institutions.

The findings above acknowledge that things are moving with time. The mode of dressing has changed with time as the new generation is coming in and as the political environment is also changing. This scenario has brought in the issue of diversity in the teaching profession because of the varying contexts which the teachers have received their training. This is the case in schools today despite the fact that different universities deal with the issue of presentability by developing a dress code for their student teachers during teaching practice as a way of preparing them for the real classroom environment. This concurs with Blumer's (1969) three outlined interactionism's guiding assumptions which state that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, social interaction with one's fellows; that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters. Basing on this assumption, teachers are able to make their own choice of clothing basing on their own personal interpretations. In this case their interpretations are derived from the political and geographical setting.

4.6.4 Human rights culture

The issues of human rights stole the centre stage of the discussion. It was found that most teachers do not follow the dress code in their schools because they have the right to exercise their human rights. For example, the head teacher from Centre 4 stated that the issue of human rights allows the teachers to dress as they wish. Thus, teachers dress the way they want because they have the right to dress the way they want.

As already alluded to from the responses of the learners', only the head teachers from the three schools; Centre 2, 3 and 4 are the ones who are always in the prescribed dress code. Head teachers "save their face" by being in the prescribed dress code because they hold high school responsibilities and they are held with high esteem in the society. In relation to interactionism, Mead (1934) talks about the self concept. He states that in the self concept, individuals are able to control their acts based on how and what they view about themselves. The findings discussed concur with Brown (2006), who states that the self emerges as a result of social interaction and the shared meanings and methods of communication (verbal and non-verbal) that result from any interaction.

When the teachers are dressed the way they want, it became hard to control some other mode of dressing because head teachers and fellow teachers became afraid having in mind the issue of human rights.

Centre 1 indicated that all teachers follow the dress code prescribed by the school. It has never happened and it cannot happen that a teacher comes to school not in the appropriate dress code. The findings concur with the theory which argues that an individual has to assess the symbols and the social situation in every interaction that takes place. Thus, each social situation has particular rules attached to them that need to be evaluated by the teachers if they are to communicate effectively to their fellow teachers and the learners. Misreading the social situation could lead to a negative interaction and as a result, negative labels could be attached to that particular teacher.

The findings above discussed the relationship of the roles of teachers and the society constructions based on interactions. From the findings, several teachers stated that some mode of dress was associated with particular personalities, professions and events. Thus, teachers learn about themselves through interaction with learners and fellow teachers based on interpretations derived from their dress. Such interpretations made out of dress determined the choice of dressing which teachers followed in schools. The way teachers perceived their dressing as professionals and how they dressed in schools can be linked to the concept of the generalised other. Thus, the teachers understood the social expectations so that they could easily guess how others will react to their dressing.

4.7 Chapter summary

Teachers are reminded that their appearance (clothing and grooming) significantly affects the way others (especially the learners) respond to them. Since it is the duty of the teachers to provide an education atmosphere conducive to learning, minimising distractions and disruptions, and to protect the healthy, safety and morals of the learners, all teachers are expected to wear a code of dress that is appropriate. Teachers are seen as people who instil values in learners and how learners are to present themselves to the society so that there is conformity between the two. Teachers therefore stand out as professionals and role models or as people who are supposed to set the standards for the young people. Therefore, what ever is accepted in society has to be portrayed by the teachers in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

In this chapter, conclusions are drawn based on the findings and discussion in chapter four. It needs to be made clear, however, that other conclusions may be made depending on different perspectives that different individuals may have at different times. As a result, these conclusions are not meant to represent the final truth about the participants' reality nor are they exhaustive. Finally, implications of the study's findings and areas for further research have been outlined.

5.1 Conclusions

A number of findings have been revealed regarding the way male teachers and female teachers dress and their experience relating to the way they dress in a school. The study revealed that male teachers and female teachers are subject to different rules and regulations concerning the schools dress code. Despite the fact that schools have a prescribed dress code for both male and female teachers, the given rules apply most to female teachers with a lot of specifications, for example, the length of the dress, material (jeans or corduroy) and colour of the type of dress.

In most schools, teachers do not completely follow the prescribed dress code. This causes variations in dressing amongst the teachers. This has an implication on the learners' behaviour in the long run. This implied that in the course of learning, certain behaviours of the learners are elicited which causes both positive and negative discipline issues because some teachers dress appropriately while some do not.

There was a conflict of interest between head teachers and the teachers. The study revealed that the absence of clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education on the teachers' dress code made the head teachers to add in other dress prescriptions for their teachers. As a result, certain modes of dressing were accepted and some were being prohibited in the schools depending on the head teachers' preference. The implication of this was that teachers dress became subjective. This in turn led to variations in teachers dress from one school setting to another.

Teachers did not know their dress code as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. This was so because most teachers were never shown any evidence or any written document on their prescribed dress code. This made it difficult for the head teachers to reinforce proper dressing among other teachers because the schools lacked proper guidelines concerning the teachers dressing. This implied that personal interests were later brought in by the teachers which may compromise work ethics.

The study found that adherence to the schools' dress code was better and greater with teachers who were much older in the school. Most schools experienced dress problems with the younger teachers. The older teachers had no problems with

conforming to the schools' dress code because of the environment in which they were raised in and the responsibilities they had in the school and in their homes.

Furthermore, the findings showed that most of the effects of teachers' dress on learners were to a larger extent caused by female teachers and to a smaller extent caused by male teachers in the school. Among the teachers, dressing was a sign of autonomy and freedom from being controlled. As a result of this, female teachers are subject to strict dress rules as compared to male teachers. It was also revealed that only one school had well documented and clear specifications of their teacher's dress code. It was from this school that no effects of teachers' dress code on learners were being felt. This implies that if teachers are given well documented rules and specifications on dressing some negative effects on the learners can be minimized.

In addition, the evidence from the study indicated that certain modes of teachers' dressing had changed with time. Head teachers and teachers expressed concern that things had changed in the way how teachers dress with the coming in of different political regimes. This resulted into the loosening in the standards of how teachers are expected to dress in the school. This implies that teachers' dress code can be achieved though it might face some resistance due to human rights and democracy. Therefore, proper reference to professional dressing should be reconciled with human rights.

The study findings acknowledged the role of the school community in creating and prescribing what both teachers and learners are supposed to wear when in an educational institution. Thus the school community through interaction creates various modes of dress and attaches meanings to it. Though some schools had no

specific teachers' dress code, there was a non-verbal dress code whereby participants expected to see the teachers and the learners' dressed in. The school context in view of interactionism was created as the product of the everyday interactions of teachers, learners and the people living in communities where learners come from.

Interactionism theory emphasises that human behaviour is influenced by definitions and meanings that are created and maintained through interaction with others. Based on the above interactionism assumption, interactionism puts forward ways of how participants can reach a consensus through redefining meaning to better interpret social actions. Ascribed meanings to dress and its interpretation serve as the key point for successful communication. This study has argued that in instances where these basic conditions are unmet, learners eventually have high levels of misinterpretation which later on develops into misbehaviour and discipline problems.

5.2 Areas for further research

This study had touched the subject of teachers' dress code in schools and how it influences the learners. A similar study to the one which I did, can also be conducted at other levels of education and help find out if dressing has the same effect. However, a study could be also done on the role of the society in determining the dress code of different professions.

Another study can be done to find out how dressing has influenced the contemporary needs of the society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of introduction from Chancellor College



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
B.A. (Pub Admin), BPA (Hon), MPA, Ph.D

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Telex: 44742 CHANCOL MI
Fax: (265) 01 524 046

Our Ref.: EDF/6/19
Your Ref.:

23rd June, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR MASTER OF EDUCATION (SOCIOLOGY) RESEARCH

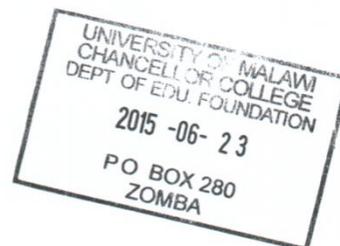
Ms Uchizi Khoswe is a student of Education in the Department of Educational Foundations at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Ms Khoswe is working on her thesis, *"Effects of Teachers' Dress Code on Learners' Learning Experience in Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Four Secondary Schools in Malawi"*. This is meant to be a request to your institution or organization to assist our student in her endeavor to collect data.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Chiziwa'.

Symon E. Chiziwa, PhD
Head, Education Foundations Department



Appendix 2: Letter of introduction from Education Division

REF. NO. SEED/ ADM/VOL.479

26 June 2015

FROM : The Education Division Manager, South East Education Division,
Private Bag 48, Zomba.

To : The Headteacher

AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

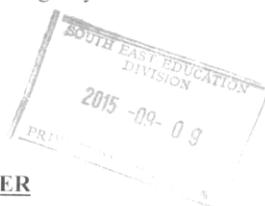
I write to kindly request your office to allow Ms Uchizi Khoswe who is working on her thesis in Master of Education at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College, to carry out her research at your institutions.

I will be most grateful if he is given all the necessary support and guidance so that her activity is carried out successfully.

I look forward to your usual support and hoping at the same time that you will accord this request all the attention and urgency that it deserves.


M. S. D. Alufandika

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER



Appendix 3: Consent Form

I am Uchizi Khoswe a final year Masters in Sociology of Education student at Chancellor College. I am conducting a study on the Effects of Teachers' Dress Code on Learners' Learning Experience in Secondary Schools. This semi structured interview has been designed to seek your views on the subject of the study. But you do not have to take part if you do not want to and you are free to opt out of any questions you do not feel comfortable in answering. If you decide to take part, your responses will be confidential. Your name will not be mentioned anywhere in the study data or report. If you agree to help with this study, I will read you a consent statement and ask you to sign or make a mark on the line below and answer the questions I will ask you as completely and accurately as you can. This interview will take approximately one hour to complete.

Consent statement: I understand and agree to participate in this study by filling out this interview as completely and accurately as possible.

Signature/ Mark _____

Date of interview _____

Appendix 4: In-depth interview guide for the Director of Policy and Planning

Section A: Demographic information

Sex: Male Female

Do you hold any other position?

If yes what position do you hold?

Section B: Content questions

1. Do you have a recommended dress code for teachers?
2. Why does the ministry have the dress code?
3. Do government secondary schools implement the dress code?
 - a. If no why not?
 - b. What would be the way forward?
4. Has your office received complaints from the schools regarding the way teachers dress?
 - a. If yes, briefly give three examples of such cases?
 - b. Did these cases have any effect on learners learning experience?
 - i. If yes, please explain?
 - ii. If no, please explain?
5. Any other comments relating to the interview that might be of great importance?

Appendix 5: In-depth interview guide for the Head teacher

Section A: Demographic information

Sex: Male Female

1. What other position do you hold in the school?
2. For how long have you been heading the school?
3. What is the recommended dress code for the following:
 - a. Male teachers
 - b. Female teachers
 - c. Learners

Section B: Content questions

1. What factors determine the choice of dress for teachers in the school? (choose from the list below)
 - i. Age
 - ii. Sex
 - iii. Social relationship
 - iv. Role modelling
 - v. Position
 - vi. Hidden curriculum
 - vii. Extra curricular activities
 - viii. Compliance to school rules and regulations
 - a. What do the factors you have chosen in (1) above say about the teacher?
2. Do you have situations where teachers do not follow your schools dress code?
 - a. If yes, please explain?
 - b. If no, please explain?
3. What do you do to reinforce the dress code for the following:
 - a. Teachers
 - b. Learners
4. Have you had any discipline problems arising from dress code from the following:
 - a. Teachers
 - b. Learners
5. Have you had times when teachers have dressed inappropriately (not suitable for the classroom situation)?
 - a. Give examples of inappropriate dress by teachers experienced in the school?
 - b. What effects does inappropriate dress by the teachers have on learners?
6. Do you have any provisions for casual dressing for your teachers?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If no, why not?

7. Any other comments relating to the interview that might be of great importance?

Appendix 6: In-depth interview guide for the teacher

Section A: Demographic information

Sex: Male Female

1. For how long have you been teaching at this school?
2. What other position do you hold in the school?
3. If yes, what position(s) do you hold?

Section B: Content questions

1. What is the recommended dress code for the following:
a. Male teachers b. Female teachers c. Learners
2. Why this mode of dressing for the following:
a. Male teachers b. Female teachers c. Learners
3. Have you had experience whereby you received comments arising from the way you dressed from fellow teachers?
a. If yes what were the comments from the following:
 i. Male teachers iii. Learners
 ii. Female teachers
- b. Why do you think you received such remarks?
4. Do you follow the dress code prescribed for teachers?
a. If yes, why not?
b. If no, why?
5. In your own opinion, does the way you dress as a teacher have an effect on your learners?
a. If yes, please explain the effects?
b. If no, please explain why not?
6. Give examples of learners' behaviour in reaction to your mode of dress?
7. Any other comments relating to the interview that might be of great importance?

Appendix 7: Focus Group Interview Guide

Section A: Demographic information

Number of Learners' : Male ____ females ____

Age range: _____

Classes represented: _____

Section B: Content questions

1. What do you understand by the term dress code?
2. What is the recommended dress code for:
 - a. Male teachers
 - b. Female teachers
 - c. Learners
3. In your own opinion why do you think the school provided this mode of dressing for the following:
 - a. Male teachers
 - b. Female teachers
 - c. Learners
4. Have you seen or experienced your teachers and fellow learners' deviate from the prescribed dress code? (Explain what they did)
 - a. Male teachers
 - b. Female teachers
 - c. Learners
5. Mention the modes of dressing (this includes hair style, colour and style of clothes, shoes and make up) that you expect to see your teachers:
 - a. when in the classroom?
 - b. during extracurricular activities?
6. What is your reaction when you see your teachers in a different mode of dress when in class?
7. Does this mode of dress have any influence in the way you learn? (Explain)
8. What do you do in reaction to this mode of dress?
9. What do you think should be the appropriate mode of dress?
10. Give examples of the types of dress modes/ styles you have seen your teachers' in?
 - a. Mention some things which you associate your teachers with when you see them dressed in the types of dress mentioned in (10) above?
 - b. Mention some things which you associate your teachers with when you see them dressed in the recommended dress code.
11. What do you think are some factors that determine the way in which teachers dress in your school?
 - i. Age
 - ii. Sex
 - iii. Social status

iv. Education background

vi. Fashion or power

v. Positions

12. What do the factors you have chosen in (11) above signify?

i. Respect

ii. Approachability

iii. Status

ii. Power (If any other, please specify)