

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
REVISED SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICY**

MASTER OF EDUCATION (POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP) THESIS

By

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DECLARATION

I, Harry Edward Manthalu, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for any other awards at the University of Malawi or any other university for a similar purpose.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Olive Violet Namagowa for her perseverance and commitment to the course of my education, and the education of my brothers and sisters. To my son, Richard for depriving him of my loving presence when he needed it most. And to my loving wife, Jacqueline for covering up so well for me in my absence.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the variations in the implementation of the Revised School Uniform Policy (RSUP), the reasons behind such variations, and their consequences on schools. The RSUP was introduced to reduce non-enrollment or dropouts due to lack of uniform, and to support the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy. The study used the qualitative research design and case study methodology. The data generation methods used in the study were semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and non-participant observation. The study outlines three main factors that affected the implementation of the RSUP. The first factor was economic statuses of the families/learners which meant that schools with poor learners tend to allow learners to learn without school uniform while in schools with well to do learners school uniform is encouraged. The second factor was misinterpretation/misunderstanding of the policy by stakeholders (teachers, parents, learners). They did not know exactly what the policy stated, thereby interpreting it in their own way. The third factor was lack of administrative will by the school leadership Primary Education Advisors (PEAS) and District Education Managers (DEM). The implementers did not own the policy thereby they did not feel obliged to implement the policy as stipulated. The implication of the results is that it is important to ensure that implementers should take part in the formulation of any policy so that they can contribute towards the policy. This ensures that they see that the policy addresses their needs and they own it fully.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CDSS:	Community Day Secondary School
CRECCOM:	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
FPE:	Free Primary Education
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MK:	Malawi Kwacha
MoEST:	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MPRSP:	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NORAD:	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NSO:	National Statistical Office
PEA:	Primary Education Advisor
PSLCE:	Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations.
TDC:	Teachers' Development Centre
UPE:	Universal Primary Education

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the study on Revised School Uniform Policy (RSUP) which was introduced in primary schools in order to augment the FPE. It presents the background to the study on manner and reasons why the policy was implemented and the consequences that followed. The chapter will also cover problem of the statement, purpose of the study, research questions and significance of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Malawi government instituted a new/revised school uniform policy in 1994 soon after the introduction of the FPE. The policy stipulated that pupils should not be sent back home from school because of not wearing school uniform. In the past, the mandatory school uniform policy made a lot of needy pupils whose parents could not afford to buy uniform to drop out of school (CRECCOM, 2004).

The RSUP was formulated to augment the FPE policy and there is no policy document to it, as it is like an addendum to the FPE policy. The implementation of FPE in Malawi brought a number of challenges. The education system was already weak with low enrolment and high dropout rate due to school fees before the FPE policy was introduced,

and as such the FPE policy weakened the system further (MoEST, 2012). In order to cope with these challenges some major reforms were introduced in the primary education sub sector. Such reforms included making school uniform not compulsory (MoEST, 2012).

The policy states that:

According to Free Primary Education Policy, school uniform is NOT compulsory. However, shall communities find it necessary to have uniform at their school they shall encourage it. No learner shall be sent back home for failure to have school uniform. Orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) shall be considered when the communities find school uniform necessary (MoEST, 2012, p.12).

However, when this RSUP statement reached the communities, it was interpreted differently by schools and school authorities. The perception held in some of these groups was that the government had abolished the wearing of school uniform (CRECCOM, 2004). Most parents were in favour of learner wearing school uniform. They argued that school uniform gives the children some identity and reduces dressing competition among them (CRECCOM, 2004). When RSUP was introduced there was a lot of misunderstanding on how to implement it. The effects of this misunderstanding were disastrous as children went to school wearing anything they desired ranging from baggy shirts and shorts, dirty jean shorts by boys: to mini-skirts and see through materials by girls (CRECCOM, 2004).

The Malawi government banned schools from requiring uniforms in an effort to increase poor children's access to schools a way of reducing barriers to school. However, according to Kendal's (2006) study which used participatory, collaborative policy and

programming approaches in an education quality improvement project in Malawi, school uniforms serve an important function by decreasing competition and social stratification among students.

The revised uniform policy resulted in school scenarios where well-to-do children changed clothes almost every school day while the needy could be conspicuously noted to be wearing almost the same clothing the whole week (CRECCOM, 2004). Most of these needy pupils started to practice frequent absenteeism and even dropping out of school, claiming that they did not have clothes to wear when going to school. This became tough for the teachers to sort out because the majority of teachers also thought that the policy allowed children to wear anything at school, whether school uniform or any clothes of which some were inappropriate for school (CRECCOM, 2004).

There were variations in the implementation of the uniform policy. Some schools in the country adopted the new school uniform policy wholesale, that is, they implemented it as stipulated in the RSUP where students were not chased away due to lack of school uniform. The school authorities encouraged those learners who could afford to buy school uniform to do so and for those who could not were not sent away. Others implemented it according to their preferences with variations. Some school authorities still did not allow learners without school uniform to attend classes; while some schools did not care whether the learner had put on school uniform or not (Moleni, 2008). This study aims at exploring the reasons behind these variations in the implementation of the RSUP.

Globally, the issue of school uniform policy has been there for some time. There have been movements for school uniform policy which tried to advocate for the school uniform policy. Most noteworthy in the movement to public school uniforms was the 1994 unanimous decision by the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in Long Beach, California to adopt mandatory school uniforms for all of its K-8 schools following an eleven schools five-year experiment (Melvin, 1994). On top of that, the school uniform policy has also come under attack to the point of parents/learners taking the authorities to court on the matter of school uniform. For instance, opponents in the USA have countered with several arguments against school uniforms. First, they invoke the Constitution when they argue that school uniforms, especially mandatory policies, violate First Amendment rights of free expression, individual liberty, and freedom (Alexander and Alexander, 2010, p. 459). And also there have been opponents and proponents of school uniform with both parties citing advantages and disadvantages of school uniform.

1.2 Problem Statement

School uniform policy has been implemented for a long time where pupils/students have always been obliged to wear school uniform during all school activities. With the introduction of the FPE, in 1994, the school uniform policy was made optional especially in the primary school sector. Some primary schools disregarded this new policy (RSUP) and still required their learners to put on school uniform. Research indicates that primary school authorities have implemented the new policy with many variations (Moleni, 2008). Some head teachers have been reported that they exclude pupils not wearing

uniform during school assembly, telling them to wait in a group as others entered the classroom and then sending them home (Moleni, 2008). These variations in the implementation of the new school uniform policy have brought a lot of problems. Some of these problems include; absenteeism, dropout and misunderstanding of the new revised policy. Some sectors (authorities, parents and guardians) have argued that school uniform policy (mandatory uniform policy and the revised policy) were both propagating absenteeism and dropout rate among pupils (CRECCOM, 2004). Some vulnerable groups in the society have felt the impact of these variations. For instance, although primary schooling in Malawi is free, some schools insist on school uniform. In such schools, vulnerable groups like orphans who cannot afford school uniform are sometimes sent back home (McBride, 2001).

Non-compliance to the revised policy by schools was noted as early as 1995 (Kadzamira 2003). With pressure from GABLE, it resulted in the government reiterating its policy on school uniforms and stating that pupils should not be forced to wear any form of uniform but should be advised to put on simple but neat clothing. This was communicated via mass media communication mainly. The radio communication aimed at making communities aware of the policy and forced school authorities to implement the policy accordingly (Kadzamira, 2003). However, noncompliance to the revised policy continues to date in spite of all the effort by the government and non-governmental organizations to make school uniform not a pre-requisite to school attendance.

Furthermore, Moleni (2008), found that the practice of excluding pupils during assembly was extended to clothes worn on Wednesday – a day when children are exempted from wearing uniform - if they were felt to be inappropriate. Pupils reported that this could include T-shirts, long shorts or short skirts. Similarly, pupils were sent home if their uniform or clothes were torn or dirty. Consequently, the lack of basic necessities, such as soap to wash clothes, was said to have a major impact on school attendance. Clearly, pupils felt embarrassed and ashamed to come to school in poor clothing and face teasing from fellow pupils, which was further compounded by teachers’ “exclusionary practices” (Moleni, 2008,p. 69).

Consequently, these variations in the implementation of the RSUP have brought about a lot of problems in schools, rather than making school more accessible for the poor. It has actually enhanced the problems like low retention rate and dropout rate, it was supposed to address in the first place; therefore defeating the whole purpose of the revised policy.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study explored the factors and reasons that have led to the continued variations in the implementation of the revised school uniform policy. The study aimed at finding out the factors and reasons behind the variations in the implementation of the school uniform policy in primary schools.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following main research question: How is the revised uniform policy being implemented in primary schools in Malawi? To investigate this question deeply, the following sub-questions were used:

1. How do primary schools interpret the revised uniform policy?
2. What are the reasons for the variations in the implementing of the revised school uniform policy?
3. What are the consequences of the variations in the implementation of the revised school uniform policy?

1.5 Significance of the study

The research question in this study is relevant to the field of education because it shades light on the experiences in schools due to the imposition or exclusion of the school uniform in primary schools. It also highlights consequences of the variations in the implementation of the school uniform policy in the primary schools.

The RSUP was implemented to support the FPE policy. The RSUP was especially implemented to reduce non enrolment or dropout due to lack of uniform. Any problems associated with the RSUP therefore also impact on the attainment of the goals of the FPE policy in Malawi.

1.6 Organization of the dissertation

The thesis comprises five chapters as follows: Chapter one provides the background and rationale for the study, the research question, purpose of the research and significance of the study. Chapter two presents a literature review of studies on uniform policy. This includes background to school uniform, the history of school uniform, legal implications of school uniform, theories on school uniform, movements of public school uniform, school uniform and absenteeism, school uniform and drop out. The literature reviewed is from both within Malawi and outside. Chapter three describes the research design and methodology of the study. This chapter gives a detailed account of the research methods, including measures to ensure trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and data processing. Chapter four presents a discussion of the findings and interpretation of the results. Chapter five consists of a summary of the main findings, the lessons learnt and recommendations.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study on the implementation of the RSUP for primary school in Malawi, the importance of the study and an outline of the thesis chapters. The next chapter provides a review of related literature. It outlines the history and trends in school uniform implementation, highlights the problems and challenges faced in the implementation of school uniform globally, and finally the chapter looks at the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a review of international and local literature on the implementation of school uniform policies. The aim was to find comparable cases, gaps in the literature, and establishing general trends across the globe. The issues covered in the chapter include: definitions of school uniform, the origin and history of school uniform, movements of public school uniform, legal implications of school uniform policy, reasons for school uniform, reasons against school uniform, academic achievement and school attendance, school uniform and absenteeism, school uniform and drop out. The last part of the chapter presents a selection of theories that contributed to the conceptual framework used in the analysis of the results of this study.

2.1 Definitions of school uniform

Uniforms in general are used to convey some sort of information to both the wearer and the public. For example, uniforms represent “power and authority; social/cultural role; rank and privilege; identification and membership; loyalty and competency” (Kaiser, 1998; Johnson, Schofield and Yurchisin, 2002, p. 42). Furthermore, Kaiser, 1998 argues that, clothing (uniform) is a visible base for assigning and receiving rewards in the form

of compliments and group recognition; they also promote a sense of cohesiveness as a group look emerges (Kaiser, 1998, p.42).

Furthermore, uniforms are seen as part and parcel of the traditions within a group or an organization. Kaiser (1998), states that organizations such as schools tend to have a context of formality; hierarchy and membership that is demonstrated through wearing a uniform. Uniforms also differentiate organizations and become a symbol or emblem of the school. Ranks of power are also depicted through uniforms. In schools there is a practice to indicate the ranks of head girls/boys through badges to reveal status (Mothibi, 2007). Thus uniforms are regarded as a powerful symbol in preserving values and traditions of organizations like schools.

2.2 Origin of school uniform

One of the renowned scholars on school uniform policy in the USA, Brunsma (2004) acknowledged that no definitive history exists on school uniform policy. He stated, “school uniforms, as we see in contemporary public schools, have their roots in the confluence of secular and religious influences that contextualized the earliest universities in Germany, France, and England” (p. 3).

2.2.1 European setting

Hesapcioglu and Giorgetti (2009) describe the common design of early uniforms reflecting religious tradition and religious habits. According to their research, education was controlled by secular clergy in eleventh century France. Rae (1990) identifies

Christ's Hospital in England in the sixteenth century as what was probably the first use of a uniform in an educational setting. Rae (1990, p. ix) described the first school uniform as a "monastic cassock". Davidson (1990) explained the uniforms as a way to instil discipline and obedience in the students. They were expected to behave in a similar manner as the monks they resembled. Brunsma (2004) added that, rigid regulations on clothing, grooming, and other such socially and culturally rooted behaviour hails, in England, from its earliest universities, such as Cambridge, which sought to keep the flamboyancy of fashion in the society outside the ivory tower.

So this was probably the first time school uniform was used in schools in England. By going with the trend, this shows us why up to now we still have variations in the way school uniform policy is implemented. Many schools still follow what the patrons of the school decide on how to implement the policy. Hesapcioglu and Giorgetti (2009, p. 1743) discussed the French Revolution and its influence on the school uniform. During this period, the school uniforms took on a "military character". The purpose of these uniforms was to instil obedience and incorporate a sense of nationalism. Uniforms began as a tool to influence student behaviour and provide an identity to those who wore them. So school uniform was used to cater for a variety of issues as deemed by the owners of the school. The model for school uniforms in England was derived from the clothing worn by poor, orphan boys and girls in Christ's Church Hospital during the sixteenth century symbolizing their underprivileged status (Davidson and Rae, 1990). School uniforms in England were used as a means of indoctrinating the masses (Brunsma, 2004). The

unstated message was: “you are a mass, you are the same, you will take your rightful place among the working mass in the industrial machine” (Brunsma, 2004, p. 6).

As school uniforms became more prevalent in England and later in the United States their use began to symbolize an elite status—those that could afford private and/or parochial schools. Brunsma (2004, p. 6) noted that, “requirements of standardized dress (school uniforms) include a symbolic rhetoric of legitimate authority, a reservoir of institutional and organizational values of the school, and a method of social and cultural control over cohorts of students moving through the system”. Although school uniforms survived in England for many centuries, their use has slowly dissipated and has even been abolished by many of the educational institutions, but their legacy, history, and impact cannot be denied (Davidson and Rae, 1990).

2.2.2 American setting (USA)

Uniforms have been worn under a variety of circumstances since early human history (e.g. military). Dress codes for students in some form have been in place since 1923 when the Court in the USA ruled in the case of *Pugsley v. Sellmeyer*, “It is a proper function of the school to require students to wear uniforms to school, and to prohibit the wearing of cosmetics, certain types of hosiery, low-necked dresses, or any style of clothing which may tend, according to community norms, to be immodest” (Alexander and Alexander, 1996, p.356). In the same vein, school uniform policy was used as a means to control fashion creeping into schools.

In the United States, “the [school] uniform has strong roots in the private/parochial sector—primarily as a symbolic marker of class status” (Brunsma, 2004, p. 9). By the early 1960s, nearly 1 out of 2 Catholic schools utilized school uniforms, a policy that had basically been unquestioned up until this point (Brunsma, 2004). Later in the 1960s, school uniform protest began. These protests centred on the invasion of parental rights and responsibilities, the promotion of conformity and similarity, cost, and the notion that elimination of social and class boundaries were not “real world” (Myers (1963) cited in Brunsma (2004)). In the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, high school students began to fight victoriously against school dress codes (Brunsma, 2004). The issue of concern in these battles was freedom of speech and expression and whether the clothing being challenged really was capable of producing distractions (Brunsma, 2004). These challenges and victories to mandatory school dress codes by parents and students during these two decades only added to the concerns and questions of the use of school uniforms in the United States (Brunsma, 2004).

Richburg and Cooke (1980) noted the first discussion on uniforming public school students in the USA was held by Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry and his administration in 1980. These discussions were prompted by violent attacks around many of the schools in the area. Barry was hopeful that the idea of “standardized dress” would “foster school spirit, save parents money, and deter the infiltration of outsiders into public school campuses” (Brunsma, 2004, p. 14). Although the idea failed to catch on at the time, the notion of uniforming public school students was born and would soon become reality (Johnson, 2010). Thus the ideas of having different way of present the school

uniform policy emerged out of the fact each school had its own need and expectations the policy would bring.

The first public school to receive any publicity for its use of school uniforms was Cherry Hill Elementary School in Baltimore, Maryland. Cherry Hill Elementary, which served a predominantly black low to middle class community, adopted school uniforms in the fall of 1987 to reduce clothing cost and ease social pressure (Brunsma, 2004). A closer investigation into the policy formation reveals school uniforms at Cherry Hill and at four other Baltimore area schools was linked to a 1986 Baltimore shooting where a public school student was shot and wounded in a fight over his \$95 sunglasses (Baker and Michael (1987) cited in Brunsma (2004). As Baker and Michael (1987) noted, this “last straw” was the momentum needed to implement a policy that had long been discussed. Other schools in and around the area followed the lead of Cherry Hill, and by the close of the 1987-1988 school year, Baltimore had five schools who had initiated school uniforms and Washington DC had three schools that had adopted the project (Brunsma, 2004).

The use of school uniforms spread rapidly and by the beginning of the 1998-99 school years, over 11.5% of all public elementary schools in the USA had mandatory school uniform policies. At the start of the 2001-2002 school years, the National Centre for Educational Statistics (NCES) estimated nearly 23% of all public elementary schools had school uniform policies, and in 2004, the NCES noted nearly 25% of all public schools in the United States had adopted school uniform policies (Brunsma, 2006). Looking at this trend, it is noted that there were still variations in the way school uniform policies were

implemented. Some schools opted for the policies while others opted out which were in majority. With this development in mind, many school authorities/stakeholders began to question whether the intended results to school safety are actually being achieved by these policies (Johnson, 2010). Disentangling the effects of the new uniform policies and disciplinary procedures to produce individual analysis of the school uniform policy has been a difficult task (DaCosta and College, 2006). This has resulted in an abundance of anecdotal “evidence” to the effectiveness of school uniform policies with rarely anyone turning to research to prove or discount the results (Brunsma, 2004). School administrators and policy makers “get swept up in the tide of anecdote and perception, limiting their ability to make informed, prudent decisions” (Brusman, 2004, p. 21).

2.2.3 Debate on school uniform

The debate on school uniforms as an effective tool to influence change in school has continued unabated since the 1990s. Proponents and opponents marshal arguments to support their beliefs about the role uniforms should play in children’s education. For the most part, teachers overwhelmingly support uniform policies, students overwhelmingly oppose them, and principals and parents are divided. But some studies (Elder, 1999; Hoffler-Riddick, 1996) have shown that parents, teachers, and students are more likely to support uniform policies when policymakers and school officials engage and involve them through the policy making process (Fowler, 2004 cited in Hodge, 2010).

According to Hodge (2010), the arguments for and against uniform policies have been too enthusiastic, harsh, and at times misleading. Those who advocate uniforms articulate

several arguments. They speculate that uniform policies (a) reduce socioeconomic distinctions among students, (b) improve the learning environment by reducing discipline problems, (c) help students focus on learning instead of what they wear, (d) increase attendance, (e) reduce absenteeism and truancy, (f) increase school safety by discouraging gangs and decreasing victimization, (g) help students develop self-esteem, and (h) create a community of learners. But perhaps most controversial is the argument that school uniforms contribute to student achievement (Brunsma, 2006). While some people see a linkage between uniforms and achievement, others do not.

Hodge (2010) further elaborates that a main argument put forth by opponents is that uniforms “suppress students’ individuality by mandating standardization of appearance and removing student expression”. Many uniform detractors see the debate on whether uniforms play a helpful role in schools as “entrenched in controversy” and largely “fuelled by conjecture and anecdotal evidence” (Brunsma, 1998, p. 54). But while this observation may have been true during the 1980s and early 1990s, the spate of studies conducted during the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s has rendered it untenable. During these years numerous researchers have examined mandated and voluntary uniform policies and their influence on student achievement, discipline, gang presence, school attendance, school climate, and school safety, and found evidence to the contrary (Hodge, 2010).

2.3 Implications of history of school uniform

With the introduction of school uniform in schools a lot of implications can be drawn from it. For instance, school uniform has been used for time immemorial to instil discipline, obedience, identity and nationalism in learners. That means if school uniform is not available the above qualities will not be present in learners. Many schools implemented the school uniform policies depending on the patrons of the schools. This shows that the variations have been around for a long time according to the owners of the schools. Other uses of school uniform included to keep the fashion out of school, and to indoctrinate the masses that they are the same. Also arguments for and against school uniform has always been there which shows that this policy has faced and will still continue to face resistance.

2.4 Movements of public school uniforms

As the 1990s began, the movement of public school uniforms was spreading in the United States. By the beginning of the 1990-1991 school years, school uniform policies had been implemented in several large, urban United States cities including Philadelphia, Miami, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Chicago, but for the most part these adoptions were voluntary, sporadic, and directed at troubled, underprivileged elementary schools (Brunsma, 2004). This would soon change as many communities and school see the need of school uniform policies (mandatory or non-mandatory).

Most noteworthy in the movement to public school uniforms was the 1994 unanimous decision by the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in Long Beach, California

to adopt mandatory school uniforms for all of its K-8 schools following an eleven schools five-year experiment (Melvin, 1994). Reasons cited by LBUSD school officials and policy makers for the implementation of such a monumental policy, “were to combat gang wear/colours, to quell the competition and fury among students over designer clothing, to level economic disparities, and to help students focus on learning” (Brunsma, 2004, p. 19). Carl Cohn, the LBUSD superintendent, speaking about the move to school uniforms, stated the move was made for, “safety, pure and simple” (Sterngold, 2000, p. 23). Fearing potential legislation over the implementation of a “mandatory” district-wide school uniform policy, Melvin noted the LBUSD decided to set aside \$175,000. A district-wide mandatory policy was a new era in the school uniform movement, and the concern was since no transfer non-uniform school was available the policy may be challenged (Brunsma, 2004).

Many authorities advocated for the school uniform policy in the U.S.A, for instance the president of the United States of America, William J. Clinton, in his 1996 State of the Union Address, spoke these words and ignited the school uniform frenzy: “I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship. And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms” (Johnson, 2010).

On the international scene, school uniform policies have always been a hot subject to discuss and in most cases they require the intervention of authorities, for instance in the

U.S.A. Schools are allowed to institute a uniform policy that requires students to wear a specific uniform. Except as provided by Chicago Board of Education in the section on Discipline in Military Academies and JROTC Programs, students who fail to abide by a school's uniform policy may not be given in-school or out-of-school suspension or detention or otherwise be barred from attending class.

However, students who fail to adhere to such policies may be subject to the loss of extracurricular activities. One of the reasons for the differences in how school uniform policy is implemented is these leeway ways given to schools. Johnson (2010) in his dissertation noted that; while some researchers and school officials see uniforms as necessary and helpful (Herman, 1998) others see them as too simplistic and unnecessary (Caruso, 1996; Brunsma, 2004; Johnson, 2010).

Schools may also institute dress code policies that do not require students to wear a specific uniform, but that prohibit students from wearing certain items or particular styles of attire and/or accessories. A dress code violation may be considered an inappropriate behaviour under the dress code of the schools. Dress codes are often designed to address gang-related activities or to prevent serious disruption to the orderly educational process of the school. Students who wear clothing or accessories that display affiliation with gangs or other criminally motivated organizations or students who dress in a manner that causes serious disruption to the orderly educational process may be subject to discipline in accordance with the terms of the Code (Johnson, 2010). Thus most school uniform

policies are school-specific; they apply to individual schools and that is why they differ from school to school.

In response to growing levels of violence in American schools, many parents, teachers, and school officials have come to see school uniforms as one positive and creative way to reduce discipline problems and increase school safety. They observed that the adoption of school uniform policies can promote school safety, improve discipline, and enhance the learning environment. The potential benefits of school uniforms include: (i) decreasing violence and theft even life-threatening situations among students over designer clothing or expensive sneakers; (ii) helping prevent gang members from wearing gang colours and insignia at school; instilling students with discipline; (iii) helping parents and students resist peer pressure; (iv) helping students concentrate on their school work; and (v) helping school officials recognize intruders who come to the school.

There seems to be little documented evidence about movements on school uniform in Africa and especially Malawi. The documented evidence just mentions in passing the issues of school uniform. For instance, Namphande (2007, p.51) in his dissertation on school dropouts and attendance mentions school inform as one of the reasons for dropout. He points out that:

“Of course primary education is free, but there are some other costs such as education materials like pens, exercise books, etc that parents may not afford if they are so poor. Of course parents have been freed from buying school uniform, but some can’t afford even exercise books for their children. Such things can force pupils out of school even though education is free.” Most parents and school drop outs, however, stated that schools are very serious with the rule of mandatory school uniform that even those who are truly

needy have to purchase school uniform for their children. This limits the attendance of pupils and leads eventually to drop out” Namphande, 2007).

Similarly, Moleni (2008, p.69) also discusses school uniform as one the factors influencing access and retention in rural Malawian primary schools. She explained that:

“Teachers are harsh; they send children without uniform out of school. The teachers do not consider that some children are coming from poor families. They only allow the standard one children at school without uniform... Because the children fail to get money for themselves they drop [out of school]. The children without uniforms can cry to the teachers to allow them at school, but teachers totally refuse those without uniform” (Moleni, 2008).

Furthermore, pupils observed that this practice was extended to clothes worn on Wednesday – a day when children were exempt from wearing uniform.-if they were felt to be inappropriate. Pupils said this could include T-shirts, long shorts or short skirts. Similarly, pupils might be sent home if their uniform or clothes were or torn or dirty. As noted earlier, the lack of basic necessities, such as soap to wash clothes, was said to have a major impact on attendance. Clearly, pupils feeling of embarrassment and shame at coming to school in poor clothing - possibly to face teasing from fellow pupils – is further compounded by teachers exclusionary practices. These were some of the practices that impacted on poor vulnerable households and the enforced and continued absenteeism can lead to eventual withdraw from school.

2.5 Legal implications of school uniform policy

Dress codes for students in some form have been in place since 1923 in the USA when the Court ruled in the case of Pugsley v. Sellmeyer, “It is a proper function of the school to require students to wear uniforms to school, and to prohibit the wearing of cosmetics,

certain types of hosiery, low-necked dresses, or any style of clothing which may tend, according to community norms, to be immodest” (Alexander and Alexander, 1996, p.356). Dramatic increases in truancy, failure rates, and violence have prompted school leaders and parents to return to stricter dress codes or uniforms more than seventy years after the *Pugsley v. Sellmeyer* case of 1923. Advocates of school uniforms believe that uniforms increase self-esteem and self-image, improve attendance, and create a more serious focus on school work (Behling and Williams, 1991; Behling, 1994; Stevenson and Chunn, 1991; Holloman, 1995; Hughes, 1996; and Shook, 1996). Those who oppose uniforms contend that uniforms engender cynicism, lead to rebellion, and deprive students of their First Amendment rights (Hughes, 1996). The opponents of school uniforms most frequently claim that students have been denied their rights to freedom of expression because of the mandated dress codes (Sher, 1995; Shook, 1996).

Opponents in the USA have countered with several arguments against school uniforms. First, they invoke the Constitution when they argue that school uniforms, especially mandatory policies, violate First Amendment rights of free expression, individual liberty, and freedom. But this argument is misleading and has lost its legitimacy because over the years courts have been virtually unanimous and consistent in ruling that school attire policies are “rationally related to the school district’s interest in protecting the health and safety of students” (Alexander and Alexander, 2010, p. 459). This reality is evident in court decisions in several states, including Arizona (Starr, 2000; Walsh, 2010), Texas (Dowling-Sendor, 2002), Kentucky (Kuhn, 1996), Mississippi (*Brody v. The Jackson County School Board*, 1999), and Florida (Hughes, 2002). Legal scholars and researchers

believe judges will continue to uphold the authority of school officials to use uniform policies to improve the learning environment (DeMitchell, 2006; Starr, 2000; Stromberger, 2005; Walsh, 2008; Zirkel, 1998). Second, in what seems to be their strongest argument, opponents have emphasized the lack of empirical evidence linking uniforms to student achievement. They argue that claims to the contrary are anecdotal and border on wishful thinking (Brunsma and Rockquemore, 1998; Brunsma, 2004 and 2006).

In the United States of America, the court cases involving schools and parents were rampant after the introduction of uniform policies; for instance, in most cases the parents presented their cases citing lack of free speech, religious freedom, and parent's right to control the upbringing of their children was hindered and on the part of school they cited valid reasons like safety (Canady v. Bossier, 2001). The courts challenged the first amendment rights of a young black youth who wanted to wear sagging pants to declare his identity. The court said that clothing was not necessarily a way to express free speech and defiant acts may not be protected speech under the Constitution of the United States (Uerling, 1997). The Courts have banned the wearing of any gang symbols or attire that clearly identifies gang membership (Majestic, 1991). The Courts further added that schools have the authority to prescribe and control the conduct of students within the school (Soltner, 1997). With the adoption of school uniform policies, there have also been other lawsuits filed. In Long Beach, California, 26 families filed a lawsuit against the school district because of the cost of the uniforms (Brown, 1998). American Civil Liberties Union (The ACLU) became involved stating that poor families were not

informed about their 'opt out' rights. To 'opt out' a family needed to notify their school of religious or personal reasons for not complying with the mandatory school uniform rule. The school board decided to change the way they implemented the policy and the lawsuit was dropped (Kraft, 2003). Courts have ruled that students do have Constitutional rights with respect to dress, but they have also maintained that school boards and other school officials may restrict these rights, if necessary, to help enhance school safety and to improve the learning environment (Hughes, 1996).

The trends in the cases show that with the introduction of the school uniform policies, there was resistance from the community (parents and students). In addition to that, parents and the school came up with different ways of sorting their differences in terms of how school uniform policies would be implemented in their different communities in consideration to their different environment. Within the Malawian context, nothing has been said in the literature about the RSUP and its legal implications as it has not reached the level of law suits.

2.6 Reasons for school uniform

2.6.1 School uniform reduces peer pressure

With society putting much emphasis on the outward appearance, uniforms are a way to avoid the competition of wearing the latest fashion trends. Dress code aside, the interest in fashion and fad combined with peer pressure can lead to pressure to spend money that some families cannot afford. Moreover, students that wear uniforms know what clothes

are acceptable and do not spend extra time each morning preparing for school (Public School Uniform, 2009).

Elder (1999) identified an increase in honour roll students at a public middle school where uniforms had been established. One possible explanation could be that school uniforms increase the level of focus in the student population. The students may have been less distracted by their dress and the dress of their peers, and more focused on the learning process.

School uniform helps adolescents, particularly girls, is that there may be substantial peer pressure to dress well which could, in turn, lead to low self esteem if a child is unable to dress “properly” due to low income or parental preferences. Uniforms negate much of this peer pressure by requiring students to wear the same clothing (Los Angeles Times, 2009).

Caruso (1996) described the environment of a school and its relation to dress as a competitive atmosphere. Many students are distracted by their dress and appearance in school, and less focused on their education. Students from lower income families may feel inadequate with their dress compared to other students. This could be a source for bullying and even school violence. The feeling of inadequacy in dress may also cause students to struggle with attendance.

2.6.2 Fostering community spirit

The wearing of school uniforms emphasizes membership and group identity, fostering a community spirit. Moreover, because students can be easily identified, intruders in the school setting can be more readily identified and students on field trips are more easily accounted for. The wearing of school uniforms helps students to realize that a person's unique gifts and personality traits go deeper than their apparel and aren't diminished by uniform dress. On top of that, wearing of school uniforms prevents the formation of dress-identified cliques (Public School Uniform, 2009).

An increased level of sense of belonging amongst students has been attributed to school uniforms (Mancini, 1997). Boutelle (2008) stated that uniforms bridge the social gap and level the playing field with regards to student attire. Likewise, Murray (2002) reports that uniforms have been linked to increased self-esteem and confidence amongst students. Further, he writes that uniforms focus students' energy on learning rather than on seeking peer approval for their outfits.

This goes on to a lot of advantages in fostering community or school spirit as uniforms also allow for a cohesive presentation as a group. When uniformed students are on a field trip they are able to find each other quickly and appear as a bonded group. School spirit is also enhanced by wearing uniforms. Moreover, school uniform makes learners to feel as an important part of the school as they feel as though they belong to the group and a sense of pride is instilled in them (Murray, 2002).

2.6.3 Discipline in schools

Hughes (1996) completed a study to determine the effects of mandated school uniforms on attendance, behaviour, and classroom environment. The researcher collected attendance and discipline referral data from school district records and administered a uniform opinion survey to teachers, parents, and students in two middle schools in Houston, Texas. In her study, descriptive statistics (percents) were used to describe attendance patterns, and a discipline referral ratio was drawn between the number of referrals and the number of students enrolled in each of the schools. Results of the study revealed significant differences in the number of student referrals; that is, student referrals decreased significantly after the implementation of mandatory school uniforms (Hughes, 1996).

Stanley (1996) conducted a longitudinal study on the impact of mandatory uniforms in the Long Beach schools after the implementation of uniforms, and her study revealed significant differences in truancy, fights, and assaults. In the year following implementation of the uniform policy, the district noted a 51% drop in the number of fights, a 34% drop in assault and battery cases, and an overall decline of 36% in violent acts, according to Long Beach School District leaders and police officers (Stanley, 1996; U. S. Department of Justice, 1996).

In another case, Ruffner Middle School, Norfolk, Virginia, which implemented its uniform policy in 1994, noted a 37% drop in discipline infractions after uniform implementation, and the research study concluded that the mandatory uniform dress code

was at least one of the variables that may have had an impact on the improvements (Hoffler-Riddick, 1998). In all of the researches, it can be observed that school uniform can boost up school discipline though in some cases it may be due to combination of two or factors that had contributed to the improved discipline in schools.

2.6.4 Improvement of safety in schools

Crimes involving stealing items of apparel are unlikely to be perpetrated if everyone's apparel is identical (*Public School Uniform, 2009*). School uniforms not only break down socioeconomic barriers, but they also increase the safety of the students. In 1996, President Bill Clinton encouraged the use of school uniforms as part of an education program that sought to improve safety and discipline. If students are all wearing the same type of outfit, it becomes much easier to spot outsiders who may wander onto the campus. In addition, uniforms decrease the number of incidences of students being attacked or beaten for items of clothing such as shoes and jackets.

Also, members of gangs frequently have a colour or style of clothing used to identify them. Unsuspecting students who wear gang colours or gang-related attire might be threatened or intimidated by members of opposing gangs, students wearing expensive or fashionable clothes might become victims of theft, or certain fashion accessories or attire may be used as a means of concealing weapons, or even as weapons (*Public School Uniform, 2009*). For example, the Los Angeles Times argues that in gang-plagued areas where wearing a certain colour is enough to set off a fight, uniforms create a more neutral atmosphere on campus" (Los Angeles Times, 2009).

With the increase in violence in many schools in America, it was agreed that safety was paramount in all schools. It was noted in a special 1993 report from the National Education Goals Panel, that there was an increase from 19% in 1980 to 25% in 1992 in the percentage of U.S. twelfth graders threatened without a weapon. The fact that one in every five students is at risk to be victimized is cause for great alarm among school officials, parents and students. For this reason, the team agreed that security is the most important objective of the school. Both parents and students are trust the school to provide a safe place for students to learn. The tragic shootings in April 1999 at Columbine High School in Colorado which claimed the lives of twelve students and one teacher and wounded 23 others, were committed by two students clad in long dark trench coats and loose fitting trousers....coats long enough to conceal the weapons the shooters brought into the school to commit their heinous crimes. A student was overheard making the following simple statement when asked about school uniforms and their impact upon violent behaviour "If shirts are required to be tucked in, it is much harder to conceal a weapon" (McHale and Herman, 1999).

According to the research done in the U.S.A, district officials found that in the year following implementation of the school uniform policy, overall school crime decreased 36 percent, fights decreased 51 percent, sex offenses decreased 74 percent, weapons offenses decreased 50 percent, assault and battery offenses decreased 34 percent, and vandalism decreased 18 percent. Less than one percent of the students elected to opt out of the uniform policy (*Manual on School Uniform*, 1996).

2.7 Reasons against school uniform

2.7.1 Student's rights and freedom

Despite the continuing controversy over the years surrounding the issue of dress and grooming and the courts frequent involvement. The United States Supreme Court has consistently declined to address the entire issue of school uniform in schools, whether mandatory or non-mandatory question by pointing out that the issue is *deminimus* (its trivial)(Karr v. Schmidt, 1972). Student dress and grooming as a form of freedom of expression are not viewed as significant as most other forms of free expression. There is, however, a first Amendment constitutional right associated with it. School boards may enact reasonable regulations concerning student appearance in school (Lunenburg, 2011). Hodges (2010) stated that while parents who opposed the policy believed it infringed on students' free expression and privacy rights, parents and teachers who supported the policy believed it contributed to students' socialization and helped them develop skills for functioning successfully in the academic and larger community. These parents and teachers see clothes as distracters that divert students' attention from what they attend school to do—learn. As one teacher observed, “if they [students] are too worried about their rights to self-expression, they are not worried about their education.”

These findings are consistent with findings from the survey where a majority of parents (53%) and a majority of teachers (95%) disagree or strongly disagree that the policy hindered self-expression and creativity and where a majority of parents (54%) and a majority of teachers (90%) disagree or strongly disagree that the policy hindered individual student's liberty (Hodges, 2010). Most research has shown that the elementary

students embrace the uniform policy more than the middle and high school students. The adolescent years bring a time of self expression and exploration. Some opponents insist that uniforms squelch free expression and it violates the students' right.

Evidence regarding the extent to which the uniform policy impacts self-expression varied substantially among stakeholders. Specifically, parents who oppose the policy overwhelmingly believed that the adoption of the uniform policy infringes on students rights for self-expression and personal freedom. Infringing on student's right to self-expression through dress may restrict students from expanding on or realizing their creative potential. Enforcing uniform dress could also possibly give a bad example of conformity to the students (West, Tidwell, Bomba and Elmore, 1999).

2.7.2 School uniforms stifle individualism

The wearing of school uniforms may give students the impression that conformity is the way to prevent conflict, and this is not an appropriate message for schools to send. Most students and even parents will argue that school uniforms stifle individualism (*Public School Uniform, 2009*). The teenage years are a time when adolescents try out different personas, often experimenting with different styles of clothing during this phase. Opponents argue that uniforms take away an individual's freedom of expression. However, the clothes that people wear, or can afford to wear, often define the group by which they are accepted. As a result, many teens are outcast due to the fact that they cannot afford the top-of-the-line, name-brand clothing. This rejection can lead to several problems for the outcast teen: depression, inability to concentrate on schoolwork,

or just a general feeling of inferiority. School uniforms put everyone on the same level because no outfit is more stylish or expensive than another. Linda Moore, Principal at Will Rogers Middle School in Long Beach, California, stated that uniforms reduce the differences between the haves and have-nots. Uniforms allow students to interact with one another without experiencing the socioeconomic barrier that non-uniform schools create. More importantly, children are not judged on how much they spent on clothes or how stylish they look, but rather for their talents and personalities (*Essay on School uniform, 2010*).

A major concern that school uniforms supporters face is the idea that mandatory uniform dress reduces student creativity and restricts student individuality. Brunisma and Rockquemore (1998) reinforced this point by pointing out that; school uniforms suppress student's individuality by mandating standardization of appearance and removing student expression.

2.7.3 Promotes outcasts (rejection and inferiority issues)

The wearing of uniforms may delay or prevent students from having to learn how to get alongside of people whose personal taste differs markedly from their own and which they may find unappealing (Public School Uniform, 2009). If a young person's uniform looks different they could get bullied for it because they really stand out. This can really affect young people from achieving at school because they think they should not try so it puts them back and they end up getting bullied even more. It can even affect their home life

because they feel bad about themselves and they might take it out on their parents because they can't afford to get them decent uniform (Save the Children, n.d).

Moreover, going to school in a scruffy uniform attracts bullying. You are treated differently to others who have a nice clean uniform on. You are made to stand out for the wrong. Even teachers treat pupils differently when their uniform is not right. Being bullied affects your grades at, your social life and your home life so you might not end up having the future you wanted (Save the Children, n.d).

2.7.4 School uniforms do not improve discipline

Some quarters are against the popular belief that school uniform improves discipline among learners. On the contrary, the wearing of uniforms does not prevent the formation of cliques or gangs. The wearing of uniforms does not prevent students from expressing unpopular or inappropriate views in other ways (Public School Uniform, 2009).

Principal Rudolph Saunders of Stephen Decatur Middle School in Maryland, a participant in Viadero's study, believes that students are better behaved on uniform days than 'dress down' days, days that school administrators excuse students from wearing school uniforms (Viadero, 2005). Furthermore, Principal Shawn Ashley of the Long Beach Unified School District, who spoke with Felch (1996), claimed there have been fewer fights since the implementation of the school uniform policy, reporting that incidents of fighting have dropped from 1,135 in the 1993-94 school years to 554 for the 1994-95 school years. Similarly, Principal Geraldine Smallwood, of Cherry Hill Elementary

School, reported to Million (1996) that attendance percentages increased, suspension percentages decreased and the focus on schoolwork increased after implementation of the uniform policy. These research findings provide information on principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of uniform policies. This study will contribute to the existing literature by adding an in-depth understanding of student's negotiations of uniform policies as perceived by principals (Nash, N and Bhattacharya, K, 2009). All in all, opponents of school uniforms claim that the use of uniforms creates resentment and conflict with the school administration and this leads to an erosion of discipline.

2.7.5 School uniforms are expensive

Buying school uniform can be a real financial strain and it is made even worse because a lot of schools are recommending just one supplier which often tends to be too expensive for the poorest families. A lot of these parents are going into debt to pay for their kid's school uniform instead of being allowed to get the uniform from cheaper places (Save the Children, n.d).

Some aggrieved parent had this to say on the way some school force school uniforms on learners; "There should be cheaper alternatives and more leniency from schools. They should be selling uniforms at a much lower price or not be so demanding for blazers to have logos on etc. The punishment from schools to pupils who do not have the correct uniform, through no fault of their own, is too harsh and they often get sent home. It's the same story for every school. I am not saying uniform is a bad thing. It ties you into a school, gives you an identity and makes you look smart. But what about when parents

can't afford new uniform or when it gets dirty or ripped? This can lead to children getting bullied consequently leaving them scared and sometimes missing school (Save the Children, n.d).

Essex (2001) had other suggestions that may affect the outcome of how school uniforms are accepted in the community. Cost may be a factor for some families. Assisting financially disadvantaged families with acquiring the uniforms may be in the plan. Schools with a uniform policy in place tended to call on the community or local businesses to help pay for the uniforms.

2.8 Effects of school uniform on academic achievements

One of the results of the school uniform policy is academic achievement and this is shown in Hodge's, 2010 dissertation. Teachers reported that the implementation of the uniform policy increased academic class time. They indicated students did not spend a lot of time trying to figure out if there's something inappropriate. So, it lends more time to teaching. There was a consensus among teachers regarding this issue (Hodge, 2010). Teachers also reported that school uniform was important for socializing students and preparing them for the workforce (Hodge, 2010). In one study in the USA, elementary-school students in both rural and urban school districts demonstrated improvement in academic achievement for the first year following the implementation of the school-uniform policy (Shamburger, 1999). While in another, mandatory school uniforms urban public high schools it led to improvement in rates of attendance, graduation and suspension, but not in academic proficiency or expulsion rates (Draa, 2005).

Finally, it appears that those elementary schools in the USA that had significant “problems” were also the ones more likely to have uniform policies introduced in their schools. High enrolments and lower percentages of students achieving at grade level may have prompted administrators to pursue and eventually adopt a school uniform policy. This may also be the case where both the safety and the educational climate of the school are perceived as poor (Brunsma, 2006). Similarly, in Malawi, the decisions for adopting the RSUP in a certain manner could have also depended on the various issues which existed in the school.

Kraft, 2003, compared two middle schools in South Carolina (one with school uniforms and one with no school uniform policy), and the results demonstrated how school uniforms may affect the students’ attitudes. Over 300 students were surveyed and the students with a mandatory school uniform policy gave their schools higher scores. An increase in school spirit or school climate was also frequently mentioned in research. Table 2.1 summarises the research findings.

Table 2.1: *Schools Image in a Community in South Carolina*

	Positive Effects As Rated by Schools Without Uniforms	Positive Effects As Rated by Schools With Uniforms
Peer Pressure	77%	76%
Image in the Community	65%	86%
Classroom Discipline	64%	80%
School Spirit	60%	82%
Student Safety	46%	75%
Academic Achievement	45%	52%
Attendance	36%	48%

2.9 Effects of school uniform on absenteeism (school attendance)

Evans (2009) conducted a randomized study of impoverished children in 12 elementary schools in Kenya. The findings convincingly showed that in schools without uniforms absenteeism decreased by 44 percent and in schools with uniforms by 62 percent. On the part of positive influence of school uniform on attendance, Hodge (2010) states that; there were several participants who provided evidence that the uniform policy has had a positive influence on school attendance. Hodges, 2010 continues to argue that although teachers reported that uniforms have potentially increased attendance, or at the least reduced a barrier to attendance, there is also evidence that contradicts this finding. The Draft Report of the Participatory Poverty Assessment gives comprehensive information about causes of dropout in Uganda primary schools combined with absenteeism (Hodge, 2010). According to this Ugandan report, one of the key causes of dropout is high

financial costs e.g. of extra UPE charges like school uniforms, scholastic materials, fees for lunch at school for pupils and teachers, top- up of teachers' salaries who are not on pay-roll, building funds etc stops some children, especially orphans and those from poorer families from attending primary school (Musisi, 2003).

Other African countries have also tried to deal with the problems brought about by the school uniform policy. A good example is Zimbabwe where the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme was introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Zimbabwe. The BEAM is a need-based financial intervention meant to increase access to education for vulnerable children which runs alongside the policy that prohibits schools from denying any child access to education as a result of failure to buy uniform. Whilst this intervention has for some years been yielding positive results in terms of enhancing access, there are a number of administrative problems associated with it. The process of identifying needy children is bureaucratic, cumbersome and not free of abuse (Mhlanga, 2008).

2.10 Effects of school uniform on drop outs

In African countries patterns show large percentage of dropouts from grade 1 (which includes average learners and repeaters). In Malawi, for example, 22% and in Uganda 32% of the grade 1 cohort in 2005 dropped out. Percentages tend to reduce in grades 2 to 4, and then rise in some countries as primary completion and secondary entry. In South Asia there are similar patterns of access (Musisi, 2003). Some of the costs which lead to drop out include school fees, uniforms, travel, equipment and the opportunity costs of

sending a child to school (Create, 2009 cited in Musisi, 2003). Some of these factors include the school uniform policy. During interviews, parents in Ethiopia often talked about difficulties in paying school fees, especially prior to harvest (when they became due); the ability to buy exercise books, pens and the necessary clothing for school also influenced whether children could enrol or were withdrawn from the first grade (Rose and Al Samarrai, 2001 cited in Musisi, 2003). Some described their children dropping out after enrolment, because they could not meet the direct costs of schooling. Additional costs e.g. registration payments, gaining copies of birth certificates (for registration), textbooks and uniform costs, were all indirect costs many parents in Guinea found difficult to meet (Hunt, 2008).

School uniforms/ policies in Africa take on a different view. In the U.S.A, the issues surrounding school uniform are centred on their relationship with violence in schools, while in Africa; it centres mainly on the financial capability of the parents/guardians. For instance, “in Zambia it is reported that poverty plays a big part in the dropout rate among pupils. The incapability of pupils to meet all of the requirements for school (i.e. uniforms, fees and learning materials) led to a high rate of school drop outs” (Kaonga, 2001). But in rare cases some schools that did not have compulsory uniforms reported a low dropout rate. The study also observed that school authorities in some basic schools in both Mufulira and Lundazi districts allowed some pupils to wear their own clothes instead of uniforms to accommodate the poor. Where uniforms and school shoes are compulsory, parents either buy second hand clothes and shoes or the same uniforms used by the older children are passed on to the younger ones as long as school authorities accepted them

(Kaonga, 2001). This case is also similar to the Malawi situation where households bear a large part of educational financing thereby encouraging absenteeism and drop out in primary schools. This has also been noted by the World Bank (2004 cited in Kaonga 2001) which points out that despite the abolishment of primary school tuition fees in 1994, households still bear a considerable share of education financing. Nearly all households in Malawi paid for one or more types of school supplies during the year 2001. The majority of families reported paying for textbooks and uniforms and approximately half reported contributing to the school development fund. In primary school, mean household expenditures on education average approximately 80 percent of per pupil public expenditures (World Bank, 2004 cited in Kaonga 2001).

2.11 The problems faced during the implementation of the school uniform policy

Caruso (1996) stated that when school authorities consider whether or not to implement a school uniform policy, they need to understand the validity of each proponent's arguments, both pro and con. In other words, do school uniforms make a difference or not in the local school setting? Numerous reasons can be supplied to argue for school uniforms as an aid for the school to achieve its educational purpose: (a) to increase school attendance, (b) to lessen distractions, (c) to increase student self-confidence and esteem, (d) to produce *esprit de corps* (spirit of a group that makes the members want the group to succeed) among students, (e) to decrease clothing costs, (f) to improve classroom behaviour, and (g) to remove some causes of crime, violence, and gang activity. With all the above reasons for school uniforms, it seems unusual there could be an equal number of reasons to rebut the use of such clothing.

In order to enforce the dress code, DeMitchell, Fossey and Cobb (2000) reported that although most principals (68%) support dress codes within their schools, many of them are cautious about implementing mandatory uniforms due to challenges, legal or otherwise, they may face. However, some researchers have suggested that principals/head teachers should have opt-out provisions which may help to protect schools / school districts from legal challenges (Lumsden, 2001). However, some authors had suggested some alternatives to follow when implementing policies, for example; Isaacson (1998) provides the following five alternatives: do not institute a dress code; institute a dress code that outlines general goals, and let principals implement policies at the grass roots level; institute an itemized dress code that can be applied throughout a district; authorize a voluntary uniform policy; authorize a mandatory uniform policy with a clearly defined opt-out provision.

Other alternatives include; be careful not to restrict religious, political, and other expressions; consider legal ramifications of the final policy / decision; make uniforms available and inexpensive, provide flexibility and assistance for low-income families; implement a pilot program and align uniform / dress code policy with school safety framework (Isaacson, 1998). By all accounts the uses of uniforms have been most successful solicited active where school officials have parental involvement in the decision-making. Research shows that school districts choosing to implement a student uniform policy should tailor these efforts around a valid educational purpose, one that furthers the local educational mission (Isaacson, 1998).

2.12 Theories relating to school uniform policy

Policy implementation in the educational arena has been characterised as a “difficult yet vitally important task” (Cooper, Fusarelli and Randall, 2004). About this, Fowler (2009) states that:

“Many official policies are never implemented at all, and many others are implemented only partially or incorrectly. Implementation can never be taken for granted. As with other stages of the policy process, school leaders must think about what they are doing and plan carefully” (Fowler, 2009, p. 270).

Other scholars have underscored the importance of effective policy implementation as well. Cooper et al (2004) asserted that “policies, like laws, are neither self explanatory nor self executing. Policies, no matter how well designed, must be implemented successfully to achieve the intended effects” (p. 84). Louis and Miles (1990) suggested that problems with policy implementation can be divided into three categories (1) program related, (2) people related, and (3) setting related. Fowler (2009) explicated these most common implementation problems by category and asserts that the “ultimate success of every implementation depends on how well its leaders can identify and cope with the problems of each” (p.298). The main theories which relate to the problem under study were rational choice theory, resistance theory and top-bottom, and bottom-up theories.

2.12.1 Rational choice theory

The Rational choice theory is a suitable theory for analyzing the policy on its implementation stage because it highlights some of the problems faced when implanting

a new policy. Rational choice theory holds that human beings calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action prior to making a decision about a particular course of action (Scott, 2000). Rational choice theorists hold that “rational” individuals anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and, in weighing their alternatives, choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest benefit (Carling, 1992; Coleman, 1973; Heath 1976; cited in Scott, 2000). In the context of this study, school administrators were routinely making calculated decisions that were in the best interest of the students and the school. In this case the decision-makers were not acting out of self-interest or exercising an individual preference which is a major tenet of rational choice theory (Anderson, 2003; Satz and Ferejohn, 1994 cited in Hodge 2010). For example, administrators’ decisions to adopt or continue to implement a school uniform policy may be influenced by weighing the perceived costs and benefits associated with implementing the policy (Hodge, 2010).

2.12.2 Resistance to change concept

Resistance is commonly considered to be a standard or even natural reaction to organizational change. It is described as an almost inevitable psychological and organizational response that seems to apply to any kind of change, ranging from rather modest improvements to far-reaching change and organization transformation. Change and resistance go hand in hand: change implies resistance and resistance means that change is taking place (Gravenhorst, 2003). Thus in this study it was anticipated that there would be some form of resistance from the implementers.

Watson (1969) defines resistance as all the forces that contribute to stability in personality or in social systems thus, he sees resistance to change as a natural reaction of individuals and social systems originating from the need for a relatively stable situation (Gravenhorst, 2000). A similar view is also found in writings on change management (Conner, 1998). Conner states that resistance to change is a natural reaction of people to anything that significantly interrupts their status quo. He explains that change disrupts our expectations and produces a loss of the psychological equilibrium we value. In his opinion, human inertia makes people cling to certainty and stability (Gravenhorst, 2003). In that sense, the community will take any form of new policy as a threat to their status quo, thus resistance is inevitable.

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) hypothesized four reasons for resistance to change and six approaches to dealing with change. People, they explained, resist change because of narrow parochial self-interests, misunderstanding, low tolerance for change, and different assessments of the situation. However, leaders and policymakers could overcome these resistances through (a) education and communication, (b) allowing participation and involvement, (c) facilitating and supporting change, (d) encouraging negotiation and agreement, (e) avoiding manipulation and co-option, and (f) eschewing explicit and implicit coercion. The practical nature of this theory could help policymakers and school officials create genuine and lasting change in virtually all facets of schooling, including adopting uniform policies (Kotter and Schlesinger (1979).

2.12.3 Top-bottom theories

In the implementation of policies, there is a hierarchical order of implementing the policy which needs to be followed. One of these orders involves the top-bottom process. ‘It begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy maker’s intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each level. At the bottom of the process, one states, again with as much precision as possible, what a satisfactory outcome would be, measured in the terms of the original statement of intent’ (Elmore, 1980). The top-down perspective assumes that policy goals can be specified by policymakers and that implementation can be carried out successfully by setting up certain mechanisms (Palumbo and Calista, 1990, p. 13). This perspective is ‘policy entered’ and represents the policymaker’s views. A vital point is the policymaker’s capability to exercise control over the environment and implementers (Younis and Davidson, 1990, p. 5-8.).

Furthermore, top-down theories started from the assumption that policy implementation starts with a decision made by central government. Parsons (1995, p. 463) points out that these studies were based on a “blackbox model” of the policy process inspired by systems analysis. They assumed a direct causal link between policies and observed outcomes and tended to disregard the impact of implementers on policy delivery. On top of that, Top downers essentially followed a prescriptive approach that interpreted policy as input and implementation as output factors. Due to their emphasis on decisions of central policy makers, deLeon (2001, p. 2) describes top-down approaches as a “governing elite phenomenon”. Pressman and Wildavsky’s original work followed a rational model

approach. They started from the assumption that policy objectives are set out by central policy makers. In this view, implementation research was left with the task of analyzing the difficulties in achieving these objectives. Hence, they saw implementation as an “interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them” (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973, p. xv). Implementation therefore implied the establishment of adequate bureaucratic procedures to ensure that policies are executed as accurately as possible. To this end, implementing agencies should have sufficient resources at their disposal, and there needs to be a system of clear responsibilities and hierarchical control to supervise the actions of implementers.

All in all, proponents of the top-down theory typically start from a policy decision reached at the “top” of the political system and work their way “down” to the implementers. The implementation of a policy using this theory involves hierarchical guidance during the whole process and it needs experts to guide the whole process through.

2.12.4 Bottom-up theories

Another hierarchical order of implementing a policy involves the bottom-up process, where policy formulation starts from the bottom level of the administrative pyramid going to the top of the pyramid. Some theorist called teachers, social workers, police officers and doctors as “street level bureaucrats” (Lipsky (1971, 1980). In his seminal article, published in 1971, Lipsky argued that policy analysts needed to consider the direct interactions between social workers and citizens. Furthermore, Hudson (1989)

argues that the power held by street-level bureaucrats' stretches beyond the control of citizens' behaviour. Street-level bureaucrats are also considered to have considerable autonomy from their employing organizations. The main source of their autonomous power thus stems from the considerable amount of discretion at their disposal (Pulzl, and Trieb, 1999).

Studies belonging to this strand of research typically started from the "bottom" by identifying the networks of actors involved in actual policy delivery. They rejected the idea that policies are defined at the central level and that implementers need to stick to these objectives as neatly as possible. Instead, the availability of discretion at the stage of policy delivery appeared as a beneficial factor as local bureaucrats were seen to be much nearer to the real problems than central policy makers (Lipsky, 1971, 1980).

In summary, Bottom-uppers start out with the identification of actors involved in concrete policy delivery at the "bottom" of the politico-administrative system. Analysis then moves "upwards" and "sideways" in order to identify the networks of implementing actors and their problem-solving strategies. On top of that, the theory is more participatory and problem solving is decentralized.

2.13 Theoretical framework of the study

From the theories discussed above, a conceptual framework was drawn out based on two major theories. In the first instance, the rational choice theory was used to explain the way school uniform policy was implemented. This theory was chosen because authorities

always have a choice on how to implement the policy. The choices or decisions are arrived mainly due to the benefits, rewards and the availability of resources. These could constitute the reasons why there are variations in the way the RSUP is implemented. Secondly, the top-bottom theories have been used because they play an important part mainly in explaining how the policy was formulated which also contributed to the manner in which it was implemented. It begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy maker's intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each level(Elmore, 1980). When the policy does not involve the policy implementers at the grass root level, it is likely to be received with mixed reactions. In other words policies are not owned by the policy implementers on the ground.

The tendency to choose an action which will benefit an individual more as in rational choice theory led to schools having variations in the implementation of the policy. Moreover, the resistance of individuals on any change which changes their status quo and disrupts their expectations also led into having resistance in schools on the way to implement the policy. Likewise, the implementation of a policy based on the elite without the consultation of the implementers at grass root will always lead to problems in the implementation. These were the concept which had a bigger role in deciding how the policies were implemented.

2.14 Chapter Summary

From the review of related literature, it is evident that the issue of school uniform and its implementation has been controversial for a long time in many countries and is likely to remain to be controversial for more years to come. This chapter has highlighted the history of school uniform by examining the origins of school uniform, the background and challenges faced over time. It has drawn from experiences mostly from the USA on the movements of public school uniform and the legal and social implications with emphasis on the legal battles concerning parents, students, the government and the school authorities particularly when they were implementing school uniform policies in their respective schools. While problems in the USA focused around issues of security and the rights of school children, in most African countries, school uniform policies are challenged due to poverty.

The literature review has highlighted the pros and cons of school uniform policy as presented by their proponents, where each side is giving the advantages and disadvantages of implementing school policies whether mandatory or opt out policies. While the findings suggest that the uniform policy influenced changes in attendance, discipline, and achievement, no conclusive evidence exists to support the assertion that the policy alone was responsible for the observed changes.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and methodology used in this study. It will also describe the field work process including the research methods used, measures to ensure trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and data processing.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses and justifies the design of the study and methodology used. The study focused on gathering information to examine how the implementation of the revised school uniform policy varied in all the cases. Different sources and methods of data collection were used during the research that enabled triangulation of information. Use of different methods and techniques (methods triangulation) helps to improve quality of the research (Mouton, 1998). This chapter is divided into five main sections; these are: research design, research paradigm research methodology, research tools, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted an interpretive paradigm because this paradigm allows the researcher to focus on contextual meaning making. In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher's interest is in the meaning that people make out of phenomena (Peshkin, 1993). This paradigm enabled the researcher to gain insight into the nature of a particular phenomenon, develop new concepts of theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon and discovered the problems that exist within the phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). In this paradigm, a researcher may study a situation without prior theory (Leedy

and Ormrod, 2001). The interpretive paradigm allows theory to emerge from the data. An interpretive researcher's knowledge is not to inform interventions but to develop a deeper understanding of the situation (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). In this study, the interpretive paradigm was applied as the approach because it allowed the researcher to take a closer look at the variations in the implementation of RSUP in their naturalistic setting using methods of in-depth study instead of surveying. The interpretive paradigm gave the best possible design for exploring the research questions in this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration into peoples' beliefs and life experiences.

3.2 Research Methodology

Qualitative research techniques involve the identification and exploration of a number of often mutually related variables that give insight in human behaviour (motivations, opinions, attitudes), in the nature and causes of certain problems and in the consequences of the problems for those affected. 'Why', 'What' and 'How' are important questions in this paradigm (Guba, 1985).

Qualitative data provides contextual information (Guba, 1985). Furthermore, in the context of exclusion of human meaning and purpose; human behaviour, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purpose attached by human actors to their activities. Qualitative data can provide rich insight into the human behaviour (Guba, 1985). Qualitative data are useful for uncovering emic views (insider view of individuals, groups, societies or cultures. On the other hand, etic views

(outsider theory brought to bear on an inquiry by an investigator) may have little or no meaning within the emic view (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative research methodology was used because through its data collection methods, it enabled the researcher to be the primary instrument to collect data. Merriam (1998) states that the researcher being the primary data collection instrument enables data collection through human interaction. The researcher rather than an inanimate inventory, questionnaires or computer, acted as instrument and was responsive to the context, that is adapted the techniques to the circumstances. The researcher looked for rich detailed information of a qualitative nature through in depth interviews (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The study was exploratory in nature, thus a qualitative approach was adopted, which is consistent with the interpretative paradigm. The qualitative approach was adopted in this study to get different participants perspectives and the experiences of the school authorities and teachers.

Research methodology also encompassed the use of theory. By “theory,” it means a set of concepts and the proposed relationships among these, a structure that is intended to represent or model something about the world (Maxwell, 2004). As LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 239) stated, “Theorizing is simply the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories”.

A major function of theory is to provide a model or map of *why* the world is the way it is (Strauss, 1995). It is a simplification of the world, but a simplification aimed at clarifying and explaining some aspect of how it works. Theory is a statement about what is going

on with the phenomena that you want to understand. It is not simply a “framework,” but it is a *story* about what you think is happening and why. A useful theory is one that tells an enlightening story about some phenomenon, one that gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of that phenomenon (Strauss, 1995).

Maxwell (2004), states that; *Theory is a coat closet*. The concepts of the existing theory are the “coat hooks” in the closet; they provide places to “hang” data, showing their relationship to other data (Maxwell, 2004). *Theory is a spotlight*. A useful theory *illuminates* what you see. It draws your attention to particular events or phenomena, and sheds light on relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed or misunderstood (Maxwell, 2004). In qualitative study, one does not begin with a theory to test or verify. A theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase of the research or be used relatively late in the research process as a basis for comparison with other theories (Creswell, 1994). A theory may not be a “container” because it does not fit a particular situation, or it inadequately explains what is occurring naturally in a situation. The researcher begins by gathering detailed information and forms categories or themes until a theory or pattern emerges (Creswell, 1994).

This study used case study methodology. Yin (2003) has argued that case studies are particularly useful for studying pertinent issues within their natural context. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” and “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Yin (2003) argues that case

study research provides an opportunity to investigate phenomena within their real-life context and that they can be quite rigorous in design, often involving single and multiple case studies, and also including quantitative evidence.

Since case study research involves the study of a particular phenomenon or concern within a real-life setting, it lends itself well to situations where it may not be possible, or desirable, to distinguish the issue under investigation from its context (Yin, 2003). This has important advantages for gaining insight into issues of access and participation in education, where a multiplicity of factors is likely to influence any particular child's schooling.

The case study gives the story behind the result by capturing what happened to bring it about. Case study can be a good opportunity to highlight a project's success, or to bring attention to a particular challenge or difficulty in a project (Neal, 2006). A case study design is considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Baxter, 2008).

This study has used explanatory case study type because it was intended to find out how the revised school uniform policy had been implemented. The study has used explanatory as it was deemed ideal for explaining the reasons behind the variations in the

implementation of the school uniform policy. As in many cases, explanatory case study was used to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. In evaluation language, the explanations would link program implementation with program effects (Yin, 2003). Explanatory case study also understands a situation from a participant's perspective and it involves discovery and hypothesis generation (Cote, 2005). So in this study, the explanatory case study was used to explain why there are variations in the implementation of the selected schools.

3.2.1 Sampling Techniques

A sample in qualitative research is a subset of a population which is selected in any given study. It is the subject of the study chosen to give a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon or a deliberate strategy to include phenomenon which vary widely from each other (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

In qualitative research, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone in a community in order to get valid findings. In research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select. Purposive sampling as opposed to statistical sampling suits most qualitative studies, in order to ensure collecting rich data that reflects the context under study.

The research was conducted in Mvera zone in Dowa district. The area was very convenient to me the researcher. Furthermore, the area has diverse ways of school administration mainly in how they are implementing the school uniform policy. The research was done in four cases (schools) which were sampled using purposive sampling. The four cases were chosen based on their style in the implementation of RSUP. In this zone the RSUP was being implemented in the following ways; (1) non-existence of school uniform-where school uniform is not available. (2) Strongly encourages school uniform; (3) anything goes; any clothes the learners wore were allowed- whether it was school uniform or not and no one was sent home because s/he had not bought/worn school uniform; and (4) no school uniform, no school.

- Four schools were selected as cases in this study. The schools included one junior school, one privately/mission owned, one government owned and the other a military owned school. The schools were purposively selected based on their individual characteristics. Purposive sampling selects information rich cases for in depth study. This is because the researcher wanted rich information from participants and schools who met the sampling criterion of having the required information. The cases (schools) were chosen in order to have the factors from a diverse background of schools. As in Malawi we have two main sub categories of primary schools which are government and private schools. Under private we have diverse sub categories like individual owned, mission owned etc. Under government we have full and junior primary schools. The four cases were as follows:

- Case one is a junior school controlled by the government, with four classes only (standard 1-4) and located in a rural area approximately 10 km from Mvera trading centre.
- Case Two is a mission controlled full primary school (standard1-8). It is also a boarding school for both boys and girls from standard 4-8. It is located approximately one kilometre from the trading centre.
- Case Three is a government controlled junior primary school (standard1-6). It is located within Mvera trading centre.
- Case four is military full primary school (standard1-8). It is located approximately eight kilometres from the trading centre.

In each school, the researcher interviewed one head teacher and four teachers (two female and two male). The head teachers were selected because they are leaders of their schools, therefore more knowledgeable about policies in the schools. The Head teachers are also the school administrators are the primary implementers of the RSUP policy. Emphasis was also put on whether they have received and understood the revised school uniform policy document. The teachers chosen were those qualified and with at least 5 years experience. This criterion ensured that the teachers chosen had a fair knowledge of policies implemented in their respective schools. The classes for non-participant observation were standard 5, 6 and 7 as these were fairly mature students and not in the examination class (standard 8).

Table 3.1: A summary of the four cases and details of the participants interviewed in each case

Case	Participant	Gender	Qualification	Year of Employment	Grade	Responsibility	Other
Case 1 Nonexistent uniform	Head teacher	Female	MSCE	1990	PT3(K)	Head teacher	Govt day school
	A	Female	MSCE	1994	PT4(L)	Head-infant	
	B	Male	MSCE	1996	PT4(L)	D/head teacher	
	C	Female	MSCE	1995	PT4(L)	Class teacher	
	D	Female	MSCE	1996	PT4(L)	Discipline	
Case 2 Uniform strongly encouraged	Head teacher	Male	MSCE	1981	PT1	Head teacher	Mission boarding school
	A	Male	MSCE	2000	PT4(L)	D/head teacher	
	B	Female	MSCE	2005	PT4(L)	Head-infant section(1-2)	
	C	Male	MSCE	2000	PT4(L)	Head-junior section(3-4)	
	D	Female	MSCE	2005	PT4(L)	Head-senior section(5-8)	
Case 3 Anything goes	Head teacher	Female	JCE	1994	PT3(K)	Head teacher	Govt day school
	A	Male	MSCE	1997	PT4(L)	D/head teacher	
	B	Female	JCE	1988	PT3	Head-infant section	
	C	Female	MSCE	1997	PT4(L)	Sanitation	
	D	Male	JCE	1992	PT3(K)	Head-senior section	
Case 4 Mandatory Uniform	Head teacher	Male	MSCE	1996	EO	Head teacher	Military camp day school
	A	Female	JCE	1971	PT2(J)	Discipline	
	B	Male	MSCE	1995	PT4(L)	Counsellor	
	C	Male	MSCE	2005	PT4(L)	Sanitation	
	D	Female	MSCE	1996	PT4(L)	Class teacher	

3.2.2 Data Collection

The qualitative data collection methods used in this study was semi-structured interviews, non- participant observation, and document analysis. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining specific type of data.

3.2.2.1 Interviews

An interview is a data-collection technique that involves oral questioning of respondents, either individually or as a group. Answers to the questions posed during an interview can be recorded by writing them down (either during the interview itself or immediately after the interview) or by tape-recording the responses, or by a combination of both (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) describe interviewing as important as it provides 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. This method is useful in a way that it allows participants provide historical information to the study, it allows the researcher control over the line of questioning and it is useful when the participants cannot be observed directly (Creswell, 2009).

In-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored. In this study, the interviewees included school administrators (head teachers/deputy head teachers) and teachers because they are the source of the needed data. Mikkelsen (1995, p. 104) refers to key informants as 'outsiders with inside knowledge' who can answer questions about other people's knowledge, attitudes, and practices besides their own. Open ended questions are used in order to get as much details as possible. Open ended questions allow for the informants to answer from their own frame of reference than being confined by the structure of pre-arranged questions. Informants express their thoughts more freely. This method was used to collect first hand information from the school administrators and teachers. The information that was sought after was their

opinions, experience, understanding of the school uniform policy and its impact on their learning and teaching process. With the use of semi-structured interviews it was possible to collect the required information because this style of interview was flexible and adaptable way of finding things out. Non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning (Robson, 2002).

According to Mikkelsen (1995), in a semi-structured interview, an interview guide is used with the topics and issues to be raised specified in advance, mostly in outline form. The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in the data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational. However, in semi-structured interviews, important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions may result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of the responses. Life histories will also be tackled as part of data collection plan in the same category as interviews. Furthermore, Somekh and Lewin (2005) elaborated that a life story is a personal account in the teller's own words; or a narration of lived experiences. "At its simplest, a life history is a life story or oral history with additional dimensions" (Somekh and Lewin, 2005).

The interviews that were used in this research were in the unstructured form. As a consequence, each unstructured interview might generate data with different structures

and patterns. The intention of unstructured interview is to expose researchers to unanticipated themes and to a better understanding of interviewees' social reality from interviewees' perspectives (Zhang, 2006). In fact, unstructured interview is "always a controlled conversation, which is geared to the interviewer's research interests" (Minichiello, et al. 1990, p. 93). In contrast, an unstructured interview contains many open-ended questions, which are not asked in a structured, precise manner. Different evaluators interpret questions and often offer different explanations when respondents ask for clarification (GAO, 1991). In this research, the researcher was interviewing the participants individually in order to get their personal perspectives and views and furthermore to come up with unanticipated themes from the participants. In doing so, the researcher would be able to come up with a detailed picture of the particular phenomenon under discussion.

3.2.2.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative data collection. The researcher had a list of key themes, issues, and questions to be covered. In this type of interview the order of the questions were changed depending on the direction of the interview. An interview guide was used, but additional questions were asked, Corbetta (2003) explains semi-structured interviews as follows:

"The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt

the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation” (Corbetta, 2003, p.270).

Additional questions were asked and some may be questions that have not been anticipated in the beginning of the interview. In this interview, note taking and tape recording were used to document the interview. This type of interview gave the researcher opportunities to probe for views and opinions of the interviewee. Probing was one of ways which was used in the interview in order to explore new paths which were not initially considered (Gray, 2004, p. 217). Having key themes and sub-questions in advance lies in giving the researcher a sense of order from which to draw questions from unplanned encounters (David, & Sutton, 2004, as cited in Kajornboon, 2005).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews as it was freer one than conducting a structured interview. In this interview, the interviewer does not have to adhere to a detailed interview guide. Patton (2002, p. 343) recommends to:

“Explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined”(Patton 2002, p. 343).

The strengths of semi-structured interviews are that the researcher can prompt and probe deeper into the given situation. The drawbacks are inexperienced interviewers may not be able to ask prompt questions. If this is the case, some relevant data may not be gathered. In addition, inexperienced interviewers may not probe into a situation (Kajornboon, 2005). This is the type of interview that is going to be used in this study. It has been chosen because of the nature of the study. The study required finding out reasons why

school administrators have variations in the implementation of the revised school uniform policy.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews in this study because they are focused in a way that the interviewer/researcher has control over the whole process and it also allows the interviewee to have freedom in expressing his/her viewpoints. The interviews were individual, one teacher after another in each case. Please see appendix 1 for the interview guide used in this study.

3.2.2.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is the obvious choice whenever the objects of study (persons, groups, or organizations) are not available – either because they no longer exist (historical aspects) or because they refuse to be questioned or observed. In addition to that, document analysis can prepare for the use of other methods or be complementary to them (Meyen, 2008). In the case of written material, document analysis allows for the use of all the methods that social science and the humanities have developed for the study of texts. However, one must always bear in mind that documents are never made without a definite intention (Meyen, 2008). Advantages for this tool include; it enables the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants, it can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher-an obstructive source of information, it represents data which is thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them and as written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing (Creswell 2009).

In this study, the documents analysed were used as additional sources of information which augmented the other methods. The documents which were analysed included; staff meeting minute books, ministry circulars. The researcher was looking for the availability of the policy document and in the staff meeting minute book the researcher was looking for minutes where teachers discussed the policy (RSUP) and what did the members discuss and decide on the policy. The document analysis guide/key questions are shown in appendix 2.

3.2.2.3 Non-participant observation

In non-participant observation: the observer watches the situation, openly or concealed, but does not participate (Marshall, 2006). Observation entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artefacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study. The observational record is frequently referred to as *field notes*—detailed, nonjudgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed. For studies relying exclusively on observation, the researcher makes no special effort to have a particular role in the setting; to be tolerated as an unobtrusive observer is enough. Classroom studies are one example of observation, often found in education, in which the researcher documents and describes actions and interactions that are complex: what they mean can only be inferred without other sources of information. This method assumes that behaviour is purposeful and expressive of deeper values and beliefs. Observation can range from a highly structured, detailed notation of behaviour structured by checklists to a more holistic description of events and behaviour (Marshall, 2006).

As its name suggests, participant observation demands firsthand involvement in the social world chosen for study. Immersion in the setting permits the researcher to hear, to see, and to begin to experience reality as the participants do. Ideally, the researcher spends a considerable amount of time in the setting, learning about daily life there. This immersion offers the researcher the opportunity to learn directly from his own experience. Personal reflections are integral to the emerging analysis of a cultural group, because they provide the researcher with new vantage points and with opportunities to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Glesne, 1999). In this study the method was used mainly in three occasions in each of the four schools. These occasions included; assembly times, in the classroom and during break times. The main observed behaviours included; the interaction between the school authorities and the learners, the interaction between the teachers and learner in class and the interaction amongst the learners during all the school hours. This non-participant observation took three months and it was the first method used before the other two methods (interview and document analysis). This time was enough to warrant sufficient observation because most of the observation was done during the opportune times like during assemblies, break time and in class in order to observe the interaction between school authorities with learners; teachers with learners, and amongst learners themselves. The problem faced with this method was that some teachers would try to change their behaviour by complying with the RSUP when the researcher was around but would revert to their school policy when the researcher was not around especially those schools which had mandatory school uniform policy. The researcher prevailed over this limitation by making unannounced visits and by being

preoccupied with other tasks like interviewing teachers and analyzing school documents while discretely observing the learners and teaches actions.

3.2.2.4 Ethical considerations

3.2.2.4.1 Access to participants and individual cases

Access to school was sought by contacting the Primary Education Advisor (PEA) where an introduction letter was submitted stating the researcher intention and asking cooperation from head teachers and teachers (see appendix 1). Permission was granted to access the schools for the research to be done. Consent for the learner's photographs was obtained from both the school authorities and the learners themselves. At the school level, the school head teacher introduced the researcher to teachers. During the process the purpose of the research was fully explained to all participants (teachers). The researcher visited all schools for arrangements/bookings to conduct the interviews and observations.

3.2.2.4.2 Ethical issues

To avoid revealing the identity of these schools, the labels Case 1, Case 2, Case 3 and Case 4 were used to refer to the study schools. In case of teachers the labels teacher A, B, C and D were used. Each participant was assured of confidentiality and anonymity that is why names were not used. The researcher also first established a good rapport with the participants so they were able to talk freely. Furthermore, the participants were also fully informed that the purpose of the research was only for academic purposes. There was no

deception throughout the research as the true purpose of the research was revealed to the participants and they were not enticed by any incentives for participation in the research.

3.2.2.4.3 Rigor of the study and trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) state that ensuring trustworthiness is important because it evaluates its worth; check whether the findings fit and are consistent, and the functioning of the findings. In this study, Guba and Lincoln's (1985) model was used to improve the quality of the findings and the trustworthiness of the evidence. The model involves four components as follows: (a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency and (d) neutrality. For truth value member checking and peer examination was done in this study. Member-checks allowed the researcher to correct errors if data was incorrectly worded. It also allowed participants to proof-read data findings to check for consistency and discrepancy of qualitative data findings. For applicability, which also means transferability; the researcher provided detailed and rich descriptions of findings from all the four. These rich descriptions can allow for applicability of results to comparable cases not included in this study. . For consistency, peer examination was used and interview questions were formulated for all the cases. For neutrality, field notes were taken to be referred to in data analysis so that interpretations of the findings are not just figments of the researcher's imagination, but are clearly derived from the data.

3.2.3 Data processing

3.2.3.1 Duration of data collection

The first method used during data collection was non-participation observation which took three months (one school term). The researcher allocated at least three weeks for each case (school) with emphasis on crucial times of the week/term (opening of school term, mid-term and first days of the weeks). Next were the interviews, where each school was allocated a maximum of one week (five working days) with one day for bookings for interviews. Lastly, five days for reading and taking down notes from the documents available (with two to three days for the school authorities to bring together all the necessary documents. However, some cases took much longer to collect all the necessary documents.

3.2.3.2 Data processing

The entire process of processing data started with the collection of the data using the methods already stated above. It involved memoing where recording of reflective notes about what was learnt. Learning from the data was done and these ideas and insights were included as additional data to be analysed. A coding and developing category system was also done. This was done by coming up with the dominant themes in all the cases thereby categorizing all according to themes. This was done in order to divide the data into meaningful analytical units like segmenting the data into descriptive words or category names. Finally, relationships between cases were also shown through comparisons in their similarities and differences.

3.2.3.3 Saturation

Saturation refers to the repetition of data obtained in the course of qualitative study and signifies completion of data collection (Streubert and Carpenter 1999). Saturation was arrived at through use of a triangulation of the three methods of collecting data (interviews, non-participant observation and document analysis). During the interviews most teachers agreed on the reasons for the variations in the implementation of the RSUP. In all the methods used to collect the data saturation was arrived at through the use of data source triangulation where the researcher looks for the data to remain the same in different contexts or multiple sources of data.

3.2.4 Data analysis

In order to allow the researcher to become immersed in the data; the researcher listened to the participant's verbal descriptions followed by reading and re-reading the verbal transcriptions. This was critical in order to identify how statements or central themes were emerging and connecting to one another for the final description to be comprehensive and exhaustive (Streubert and Carpenter, 1999).

Interpretational analysis was employed to analyse the interview transcripts in this study. In this analysis the researcher was looking for patterns (threads, constructs, commonalities) within the data to explain the phenomenon (Gall, Borg., & Gall, .1996). The emerging themes were used as units for the analysing the results in each case (Minichiello., Aroni.,, Timewell.,, and Alexander.,1990) who posits that qualitative content analysis usually uses individual themes as the unit for analysis. Analysis focused

upon identifying recurrent themes across transcripts. The data was organised around topics, key themes or central questions.

This process of analysis was done on a case by case basis: that is to say each of the four cases in this study was analysed separately and individually in order to be able to make informed comparisons across the case study schools. Emphasis was on identifying emerging themes in each case study, patterns, similarities and differences.

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained the research design and methodology of the study. This included a description of the basic research design, an account of ethical measures, and measures to ensure trustworthiness and a description of data collection and data processing methods. The next chapter is a discussion of the findings and interpretation of the results and the comparisons between among the four cases. In this chapter, the researcher has focused on presenting main findings; interpretation and data analysis.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study on the four cases where school uniform is strongly encouraged, anything goes, no school uniform no school and non-existence of school uniform. The chapter begins with an overview of the case studies and then it describes the main findings of the study. In section 4.5, the four cases have been compared by looking at the emerging themes. The findings are also presented in accordance with each theme and the research questions.

4.1 Case One: Non-existence of school uniform

Case One is described as “non-existence of school uniform” because at this school no school uniform is in existence, even the learners and school authorities don’t know the type or colour of school uniform to put on; that is, the school authorities and learners cannot even identify the school uniform for their school. Learners in school uniform at this school are those transferred from other schools. Any clothes put on by the learners were accepted and learners were not chased because they have not put on school uniform. On top of that the school administrators did not even encourage learners about wearing school uniform; school uniform was nonexistent among learners. In this case, the learners are allowed to put on anything whether school uniform or not and no one was sent home

because s/he had not bought/worn school uniform. This school is a junior (STD 1-4) with a head teacher and four teachers. It is located approximately 10 kms from the trading centre. It is a government controlled school, and its catchment area only comprises of one village which relies on agriculture as its source of income. At this particular school, the issue of school uniform was left in the hands of the parent/guardians or even the pupils. They were left to choose what to wear to class and it was no problem to the school authorities. Moreover, the school uniform is not encouraged and school uniform is not compulsory and those learners without school uniform were never sent home. This is shown in the way learners are dressed in the picture below.



Picture 0.1: Learners in Case One: The picture was taken as they were coming from the assembly going into classes

4.2 Case Two: School uniform strongly encouraged

In case study two the learners are encouraged to put on school uniform to the extent that those who cannot afford to buy school uniform, the authorities are ready to provide for them. “Strongly encouraged” comes out because the school authorities do not just tell their learners to put on school uniform but also chase learners who are capable of buying school uniform or have neglected wearing it. The other group who can afford to buy school uniform but choose not to buy/wear it are sent home to buy/wear school uniform. The case is a mission controlled boarding school for both boys and girls. The school is located approximately one kilometre from the trading centre. The learners in this school come from a large area and some from places like Lilongwe and Blantyre. Furthermore, the school has all the necessary facilities for teaching and learning process such as a library, hall and girls and boys hostels.

School uniform is not compulsory at this school but it is strongly encouraged. The head teacher further elaborated that:

“At this school, learners who are able to buy school uniform are strongly encouraged to buy the uniform in some cases even to the extent of sending them home to buy school uniform. On the other hand, learners who are unable to buy school uniform are given the exception; they are not sent home. School uniform is worn on daily basis, with the exception of Wednesday when learners are supposed to put on other clothes apart from school uniform on the assumption that they have washed their uniform ready for Thursday and Friday” (Head teacher, Case 2).

The criterion used is that they observe the learners in their first week and they are able to identify those who are able and not able to buy uniform. In rare cases, some poor learners are given uniform by some well wishers and teachers. They try to make ensure that they

send back only learners who are capable of buying school uniform not everyone. Sometimes members of staff will contribute a little something in order to buy school uniform for orphans or needy learners. On the same point some high performing but poor learners are given uniform by the administration as a reward for their good performance in class. All in all, school uniform at this school is “strongly encouraged”. This is in line with the rational choice theory where “individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences'. They act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting.”(Scott, J. 2000).

The relationship between preferences and constraints can be seen in the purely *technical* terms of the relationship of a means to an end. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals. (Scott, J. 2000).

In Case Two, it was noted that the school had problems in record-keeping for instance; in one of agenda of staff meeting where members queried about the disappearance of the staff minute book on 11-05-07 and 16-01-08. Upon perusing the staff meeting minutes it was noted that the meetings were held irregularly (once every term) which is not up to the ministry regulation which requires staff meetings to be held once per month. On top of that, the head teacher informed all members that learners should always be in school uniform whenever they are going out of the school premises especially the boarders. That is when they are going out on weekends to the market at the Trading centre or Church

services (04-06-09 in STD8 from1200-1600hrs). This augments the fact that the school strongly encourages the wearing of school uniform by pupils in all school activities, that is, within and outside the school premises.

Most of the learners at this school (Case Two) were in school uniform with the exception of just a few individuals. This is explainable by the fact that school uniform at this school is strongly encouraged to the point that those who can manage to buy school uniform are sent home to buy or wear school uniform. Most learners appear to be neat and tidy in their dressing, that is, those in school uniform and those not in school uniform.

Most learners in school uniform are those learners who are older and are in the upper classes mostly in the senior section (standard6-8) (10years and above). While the majority not in school uniform are those in the junior and infant sections (5-10years).

4.3 Case Three: “Anything goes”

“Anything goes” here means that the students are allowed to put on anything whether a school uniform or not. The administrators only inform the learners about the advantages of school uniform without going the one step further of chasing the learners. The school is located within the trading centre of the Town. It is a junior school with six classes only. Its catchment is the trading centre itself. The school has inadequate teaching and learning facilities like inadequate classroom blocks, dilapidated toilets, no library and no administration block.

At this school, school uniform is encouraged but not so strongly as other schools. Head teacher pointed out that:

“It is all because of the community (parents/guardians) are problematic. The community doesn’t like to shoulder any costs related to school of their children. As most of them come around Mvera trading centre, most of them are business minded and they calculate anything in terms of loss and profit; so buying school uniform to them is seen as a loss. Most of them misunderstand the revised school uniform policy as they think that government has discontinued the wearing of school uniform for good. While others understand the revised school uniform policy very well but tend to hide behind the issues of democracy, human rights and the right to education of their children in order to run away from buying school uniform” (Head teacher, Case 3) .

So with the above issues at hand, the head teacher decided to just simply encourage learners to buy school uniform by highlighting the advantages of school uniform. For instances during assemblies, the head teacher would pick out a learner who has put on school uniform and point out how s/he is looking presentable in the hope that other learners will be impressed and buy their own school uniform. The learners put on anything they can find a shown in picture 2 next page.



Picture 0.2: *Learner in Case Three at break time ready to take their meal provided by the school.*

In Case Three, Teacher A pointed out that:

“They encourage pupils to put on school uniform without chasing any pupil for not wearing school uniform. At this school they allow learners to put on school uniform but if they cannot afford to do so they can put on any cloth provided it is appropriate and they only send those learners who have dressed in inappropriate clothes like too long or short skirt, baggy shorts with a lot of pockets, T-shirts and long shorts. They do this mainly because their school is in the rural area and most parents could not afford to buy school uniform. If it was in urban or semi-urban area they insisted that they could have strongly encouraged learners to put on school uniform. They chase learners in inappropriate dressing because it is part of discipline and moreover if they can afford those clothes they can also afford to buy proper dressing” (Teacher A, Case Three).

At play in this school we have the rational choice theory where the head teacher together with the parents has agreed to be lenient on the school uniform depending on the circumstance at hand. This has been done by calculating the likely costs and benefits of any action, in this case, school uniform, before deciding what to do.

4.4 Case Four- No uniform, No school

In case of mandatory, it means that all learners must put on school uniform from Monday to Friday except Wednesday. The rule which applies here is no school uniform, no school. In “no school uniform no school”; it means that learners are not allowed to attend school if they have not put on school uniform. The school is a military controlled one with the head teacher and almost 70% of the teachers being men in uniform. Furthermore, the school is solely controlled by the military and they just work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education on crucial educational exercises like national, examinations, curriculum e.tc. On top of putting on the school uniform, the pupils are required to put on a pair of shoes. This is also that shoes are also mandatory although not part of the

school uniform. This means that every pupil is supposed to put on a pair of shoes of whatever colour or make provided it is presentable not overdoing it. For example s/he cannot put on a gumboots/combat boots as shoes.

In Case Four, the head teacher pointed out that the responsibility lies solely with the head teacher to check on the school uniform, inform parents and follow up until the pupil has got the uniform. It is also the duty of the head teacher to sensitise the community on the importance of school uniform. For instance, there was a case in which only one pupil in the whole class had no school uniform. The head teacher had to call the parent and let him enter the class to see that only his child did not have a school uniform in the whole class. The parent felt very bad that he acquired the school uniform within a week.

All the participants I interviewed in Case Four agreed that they know about RSUP and that it states that school uniform should not be mandatory and moreover it has not been abolished but pupils should be encouraged to buy and wear it. However, at this school everyone is forced to wear school uniform on all school days except on Wednesday. Teacher C also added that:

“On top of making school uniform mandatory, they also enforce the rule on the Newcomers and STD 1 learners. The rule states that a newcomer is given one month as a grace period to acquire school uniform; if s/he doesn’t acquire it, is sent back. In case of STD 1 pupils, they are given the first term as a grace period to acquire school uniform, failing that they would be sent back home until they acquire school uniform. Sometimes the rule is slightly bent mainly for those pupils with poor socio-economic background so that sometimes the grace period for acquiring school uniform is a little bit extended to such type of pupils; however, in the long run they still acquire the required school uniform” (Teacher C, Case 4).

4.5 Themes as presented in the 4 case study schools

Ten themes emerged from the case studies as summarized in Table 3. A tick (√) indicates availability of the theme in the case; while a cross (X) indicated that that theme was not available in that case school.

Table 0.1: Summary of the Main Themes from each of the Four Cases

THEMES	CASE 1 Nonexistent uniform	CASE 2 Uniform strongly encouraged	CASE 3 Anything goes	CASE 4 Mandatory Uniform
Economic status of the families/learners	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improper dissemination of info about the policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of administrative will by the school heads, PEA's and DEM's	✓	×	×	×
Implementation according to the advantages/disadvantages of school uniform	✓	✓	✓	✓
Opinions/Interferences of the stakeholders (parents/teachers)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regard/disregard of human rights of the learners in the implementation of the RSUP	×	✓	✓	✓
Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation procedures by the policy formulators	×	×	✓	✓
Misinterpretations and understanding of the policy	×	×	✓	×
Ownership of some institutions (schools)	×	×	×	✓
Consequences of variations in the implantation of RSUP	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.5.1 Economic status of the families/learners

This theme was prominent in Case Three (Anything goes) where school uniform is not compulsory and those learners without school uniform are not being sent out/home. The policy is specifically for those poor learners who could not afford to buy school uniform so that they should be given an opportunity to learn so that their right to education should not be trampled on because of their poverty. The head teacher emphasized that “they don’t enforce school uniform very much, they only emphasize on the need and importance of school uniform. In short, school uniform is not compulsory but it is encouraged mainly by looking into the advantages of school uniform”.

In Case One, there is no mention of school uniform to learner as the head teacher said that this is in regard to the catchment area of their school which consists of very poor families. That is why they do not insist on school uniform for every pupil as they would deny a lot of children their right to education. The head teacher further elaborated that “they wish they could strongly encourage the wearing of school uniform on all days except on Wednesdays. However, this could have negatively impacted on their education and the administration of the school.” This is in line with the tenets of rational choice theory where people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do. That is why the authorities at this school are mainly concerned with the catchment area than what the policy states.

Teacher C in Case One pointed out that:

“We actually look at the catchment area of the school as most of it consists of poor families. With this problem at hand they decided to let pupils come to school in whatever clothes they deem appropriate; not out of negligence or defiance to the authority. He also further elaborated that if they insist on school uniform or any appropriate dressing the school would only have a few pupils as most of them would drop out of school completely” (Teacher C, Case One).

This in line with the common characteristic of rational choice theory where individuals then optimize when making decisions – they make strategic choices in order to achieve their most preferred outcome (Bryan, 1999).

In Case One; one of the teachers B noted that almost all the parents/pupils are willing to buy school uniform mainly if it is during the harvesting period but not during the rainy season when they are preoccupied with acquiring fertilizer and seeds. However, parents are very understanding on the advantages/importance of school uniform for their children. On the part of pupils themselves, most of them would like to have school uniform but the problem is that they could not afford to buy it. In conclusion the problem is more of the socio-economic status of the families.

Here the rational choice theory is salient. The individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their 'preferences'. They act within given constraints and on the basis of the information that they have about the conditions under which they are acting (Heath 1976, p. 3; Carling 1992, p. 27; Coleman, 1973) as Teacher B also added that “school uniform is not compulsory because they take into account the catchment area

of the school where most of them are poor, however, school uniform is encouraged through the PTA”.

During one of the staff meeting, other members pointed out that some parents cannot afford to buy school uniform for their children citing many reasons like; lack of money, poor harvests and the number of children they support in school because many families had five or more children in school on top of orphans they support. The members urged the head mistress to work together with the PTA in order to convince parents/guardians to buy school uniform for their children.

Case Two (Uniform strongly encouraged), is a boarding school and some pupils are from faraway places like Blantyre and Lilongwe, while at the same time they have poor pupils from the areas around the school. This is why they decided to strongly encourage those pupils who are capable to buy and wear school uniform to do so, and are required to put on other clothes other than school uniform. On top of that, the school has also considered the advantages of school uniform to the pupils and the community as a whole like identification as most of them will go out during weekends to the market or hospital.

The head teacher also narrated that they decided to implement the school uniform policy in this manner “because of the different economic statuses of the learners (some are rich others are poor). This is so because the school has boarding facilities for both girls and boys such some learners come all the way from Lilongwe even Blantyre to learn at this school. While others are from the community around the school so there is a big

difference in their economic statuses”. The head teacher here is applying the principles of rational choice theory where the theory holds that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Heath, 1976).

4.5.2 Improper dissemination of information about the policy

The participants I interviewed clearly specified that there has not been any follow up of the RSUP by the higher authorities like the PEA, DEM or Ministry of Education officials. It is usually the head teacher and some members who now and then touch on the issue of school uniform.

Most teachers at this school got the information about school uniform policy through their PEA and sometimes through the meetings which are conducted occasionally at the Teacher Development Centers (TDC). Sometimes the information is disseminated by the head teacher through staff meetings and caucuses. Learners and parents are informed of the importance of school uniform like; identification; it is inexpensive; no feeling of envy among learners and many more reasons. However, officials from the ministry of education have never ever visited the school to monitor and evaluate the policy. In Case Two, it is mainly the head teacher, who is the chairman of the PTA and school committee who has the responsibility to disseminate this information. Sometimes it is the deputy head teacher because he is also the secretary of the PTA. However, the mode of disseminating the policy in Case Two is different from the other schools. This is so

because they don't publicize the fact that some students are sent back while others are not; mainly parents only know that school uniform is encouraged and much preferred at their school (according to Teacher B in Case Two).

The head teacher explained that he saw and read the circular at his previous school where he was teaching. This is so because he has been a head at this school from 2009 when the policy was already in place. However at his present post there was no copy of the circular due to bad record keeping practice. This practice of information dissemination is due to the weakness of top-bottom policy formulation and implementation theory where; it begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policy maker's intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each level. This is so because in the end the policy is not understood clearly and there is resistance among the actual policy implementers on the ground.

The head teacher said that they share the information through assemblies, in class to the learners by class teachers and through PTA and school committee by the head teacher. On top of that, head teachers used to use ward councillors to disseminate the message to the general population in those days when ward councillors were elected and available. Teacher A and B said that he only heard that there was a circular about the school uniform policy but he had not actually seen it himself. The information was actually got through the meetings they have with their head teachers like in staff meeting and caucuses. Teacher C got the information through the radio mainly, not the circular or any

other document from the ministry. While on the other hand, Teacher D said that it was actually through staff meeting when she first held about it.

In Case Two, the head teacher's views on the issue of school uniform was that all learners should be in school uniform; in other words school uniform should be compulsory like the old times before the implementation of the revised school uniform policy (1994). The head teacher also noted that "the frequent changes in both the policies and the dress code will always confuse the parents and guardians. So the government/ministry should come up with one policy and stick with that to avoid confusion."

The head teacher said that the information got to her school through the usual channels like the circular and through the emphasis by the PEA whenever he has time for them. She also said that; learners are told about the RSUP during assemblies and to parents it is mainly through events like closing of schools where parents and guardians come to listen to results of their children. During such gatherings, the head teacher takes the opportunity to disseminate the information about the revised school uniform policy and the advantages of wearing school uniform to parents available at the occasion.

In Case Three (Anything goes), Teacher A had this to say on the dissemination of the policy; "I first learnt about the revised school uniform policy through rumours and speculation". Teacher B was through a circular which is not currently available at the school; while teacher C it's through the radio and the PEA and Teacher D.

In Case Three, Teacher A observed that “the revised school uniform policy was badly implemented as school uniform is necessary and it’s a must to all pupils”. The teacher argued that “it was because of political reasons that the RSUP was formulated and implemented. Politicians formulated the policy just to gain cheap popularity and appease some sectors of the society not really looking at the implications of the whole policy and the necessity of the school uniform in the teaching and learning process. As always politics of appeasement always fail as this policy has failed. Furthermore, the stakeholders which in this case are the teachers were not consulted.” This also marks the weakness of top-bottom theories which had been used to implement the RSUP. It has been noted that top-bottom perspectives assumes that policy goals can be specified by policymakers and that implementation can be carried out successfully by setting up certain mechanisms with little or no regard to the actual implementers.

In Case Four (Mandatory Uniform), the head teacher said he heard about the RSUP through the meetings with the PEA but no written document has ever reached him like circulars or the actual policy document. Some participants like Teacher A said that she had never heard about the revised school uniform policy. What she knows is that all pupils should wear school uniform except on Wednesday-when they are given time to wash their school uniform. Some participants like Teacher B and C and D heard about the revised school uniform from their head teacher and the PEA.

In Case Four, according to the staff meeting held on 11th November, 1994 in the staffroom at 11:30 am, it shows that the head teacher and the members of staff were well

briefed on the introduction of the RSUP although they decided to implement it differently as stipulated in the policy document. At this staff meeting, the chairman (D/head teacher,) briefed the teachers on the issues and topics which were briefed by the (Assistant District Education Officer) ADEO and the (Inspector of Education (IPE) which was held on 28-10-94. The ADEO remarked on many issues one of them being of school uniform pointing that, “No child should be chased because of lack of school uniform. Pupils should be encouraged to identify the importance of school uniform and proper dressing of school children. The A.D.E.O further elaborated that no child should be denied access to universal primary education by chasing him/her away because of lack of school uniform”.

Teacher A in Case Three also explained that the head teacher addresses the issue of school uniform mostly during the assembly time where pupils are told on their stand regarding RSUP at their school. The head teacher informs learners about the school’s Uniform policy during the assembly and he will sensitise parents/ community during PTA meetings. Teachers have a duty to check if learners have put on an appropriate and suitable school uniform.

In general, the findings show that school administrators are in a great dilemma when it comes to the issue of implementing the RSUP. This is so because the head teacher is given a policy which on one hand encourages the use of uniform in schools, and on the other hand is flexible on the wearing the of school uniform. That is why only those schools that have some backing from other authorities that they take one step ahead to

implement the revised school uniform in their own way. For instance, Case Four the military school takes advantage that it is an army school and does not answer directly to the Ministry of Education. They were thus able to follow the no uniform, no school policy. The other (Case Two) takes its backing from the fact it is a mission school or semi-private school.

4.5.3 Lack of administrative will by the school heads, PEA'S and DEM'S

In Case One, it was discovered that school members did not discuss much about school uniform since the policy has been there for some time and the school already had an agreement with the members of staff and the community in how to implement the RSUP. The only reference to the RSUP is found on staff meeting minute which was held on 08-07-11 from 10:00am in standard 1, with headmistress as the chairperson. At this meeting the teachers agreed to insist on parents to buy school uniform through the citation of the advantages of school uniform. Members also agreed to liaise with the PTA so that they should be told to buy school uniform for their pupils. It also emphasized that parents should also be told that school uniform is not compulsory but should be encouraged. In all staff meetings, it was observed that most members were attending these meetings especially this one on 23rd March, 2009 where all members of the school were available at staff meeting (5 members in all because the school had only 5 members of staff. In most cases 2, 3 and 4, administrative will is not available is a due to the fact that the policy stipulates that school uniform is not compulsory. However, the real issue on the ground is that pupils are not even encouraged to put on school uniform, every pupil puts on clothes which suit them at that particular time. It seems that members actually

discussed about the proper way to implement the RSUP but did not go the extra step to implement what they had discussed. In other words, they could not walk the talk.

4.5.4 Implementation according to the advantages/disadvantages of school uniform

In Case Two, during a staff meeting which was held on 08-07-11 from 10:00am in STD 1 with the headmistress as the chairperson. The head teacher and members agreed to insist on parents to buy school uniform through the citation of the advantages of school uniform which were as follows: school uniform is inexpensive compared to other ordinary clothes; all learners look the same whether from the rich or poor families; identification of pupils within and outside the school premises is easy, for example in educational functions like football or netball. Teacher D in Case Two concurred with this idea and stated, “school uniform should be compulsory because if schools just encourage learners/parents to buy or wear school uniform, they will take advantage of it and will not buy/wear school uniform.”

In the documents available, the head teacher informed members of staff that the main reason for the school’s requirement for all learners to be in school uniform is mainly for identification of learners. For instance, the school has some learners who are boarders, with that in mind; the learners need to be in school uniform whenever they are going out of the school premises for easy identification (staff meeting held on 04-06-09). With the non-participant observation conducted; there was no overt physical behaviour or gestures among the pupils as they regarded each other as equals. Although in rare cases I could observe some pupils admiring their fellow pupils who had put on school uniform. The

obvious message in this behaviour was that they very much liked to have a school uniform of their own because their fellow students looked better than them although most of them had put on expensive clothes. On top of that, other pupils were also attracted by other learners who had put on expensive clothes and it was also obvious that most pupils were admiring the expensive clothes of their fellow pupils and would have liked to have them. Learners at this school (Case Three) were able to mix freely without problems since the issue of dressing started long time ago.

In Case Four it was perceived that school uniform was of the utmost importance in the teaching and learning process. The head teacher and the teachers at this school gave a lot of reasons why they enforce school uniform regardless of the RSUP.

In Case Four, the head teacher gave a lot of reasons for the implementing the RSUP in that way. He explained that:

“Pupils used to envy expensive clothes worn by others and they felt inferior to their friends; pupils look smart and neat in school uniform; pupils are easy to identify in school uniform during functions like sports with other schools and if they are involved in cases of indiscipline they can be identified and disciplined accordingly. That is why at this school, school uniform is mandatory and on top of that, the school also strongly encourages learners to put on shoes during the rainy season and sweaters during the cold season for their own protection. However, the shoes and sweaters are not part of the school uniform, but it is a must that they put on shoes. This means that learners can put on any kind of shoes or sweaters on the appropriate seasons” (Head teacher, Case 4).

The head teacher continued by saying that mainly they implement this policy in this manner in order to help the learners on their right to education so that the learning and teaching process should be done effectively without any external impediments like envying their friends in expensive clothes, feeling isolated and embarrassed in class and any psychological effects which can be brought about because of difference in dress. They like to put on school uniform because they are not mocked by their peers; the look of the same level in uniform(socially and economically); they are not isolated by their peers; they concentrate much of their time in learning than thinking about what they will/have worn in class so their performance in class is excellent.

According to Teacher C most pupils like it because they look the same level although they come from a diverse socio-economic background (sons and daughters of military parents of all ranks from the most junior to the most senior). There is a very wide gap in terms of social and financial standing in the military. So when all learners are in school uniform there is no discrimination regarding the pupil's socio-economic background.

According to the staffroom meeting held on 29th June, 1999 chaired by the head teacher the chairman emphasized that pupils should be encouraged to wear woollen clothes, which is part of the school, uniform during the cold season for them to learn effectively. He also encouraged Form teachers to check that all learners are in school uniform and have put on a pair of shoes. This is supposed to be done every day except on Wednesdays. He further elaborated that school uniform is important because it is easy to identify their learners, learners do not envy their friends who have put on expensive

clothes and also for their own protection in cold and rainy weather, like in the case of sweaters and shoes. He also said that boys should be advised to wear good and smart pairs of shorts and they should be discouraged from wearing funny looking pairs of shorts-bermudas. He went on to saying that girls should also be encouraged to look after their hair by applying the recommended hair chemicals and combing their hair properly. The head teacher is making this decision based on the tenets of rational choice theory which claim that “we are rational in the sense of trying to identify and follow our interests within our limitations of experience and our relatively short-sighted ability to make prognoses over the life course. Apart from that, the school uniform is mandatory in this case because the interests are coming from the military environment (barracks) from within which the school is embedded. Interests are an essential part of the explanation whether they enter through the front door, as a conscious element in developing norms, or through the back door, as a past investment in personal development that motivates individuals to sustain the institutions that they have built their lives around, whether or not those institutions are the product of rational action” (Amler, M, 2011). This is in line with the issue of wearing shoes which is not part of the school uniform. However the head teacher and the PTA deemed it fit and proper to enforce it for the benefit of the learners based on their experience and the advantages of wearing shoes, and also in line with Military ethos, which was the overarching background and of this school.

Learners were able to mix with everyone since they had all put on school uniform and there was no segregation in terms of dressing only for those rare and extreme cases where

some learners would put on a funny and different school uniform. This was actually observed on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

4.5.5 Input (Opinions/interferences) by the stakeholders (parents/teachers)

On teachers opinions and views, there were a lot of issues coming out with regard to pros and cons of school uniform and on how to implement the RSUP. With reference to the staff meeting held on 10-02-10 in Case Three; the head teacher and members of staff agreed to simply encourage the learners to put on school uniform by any means possible like commending those learners well dressed in school uniform. But they should refrain from sending home those learners not in school uniform because this could lead into confrontation with the parents as shown from the previous experiences.

One particular teacher (D) in Case One pointed out that “school uniform should be compulsory for the sole reason that most parents are reluctant to buy school uniform, and if it is made compulsory, they will try their level best to acquire the school uniform. On the other hand if they are given all the freedom, they will never buy school uniform”. The resistance of the parents is acting in line within the framework of resistance to change theory where resistance to change is a natural reaction of people to anything that significantly interrupts their status quo and change disrupts our expectations and produces a loss of the psychological equilibrium we value (Conner, 1998). The parents do not like to change in the way their children dress in school.

The head teacher's view/opinion was that school uniform should be encouraged since it has a lot of advantages compared to disadvantages like identify, ordinary clothes are expensive compared to school uniform. It should not be compulsory. In other words the head teacher wanted it to be strongly encouraged in schools for the good reasons it brings about in schools but it should not be compulsory.

On the other hand, all the four teachers were of the view that school uniform should be compulsory by taking into account that if it is not compulsory parents will not take the extra effort to buy school uniform. Furthermore, if the school just encourages learners/parents to wear school uniform, they will take advantage of it and they will not buy school uniform.

In Case One, Teacher B opted for the school uniform to be compulsory. She said that, "taking into account that school uniform allows the pupils to be on the same level without envying their fellow pupils clothes; it allows learners to learn better in class. This was also augmented by Teacher C in Case One who said that school uniform should be compulsory regardless of the misconceptions associated with it".

In case Two, the views and opinions of the staff members were unanimous on the way they had to implement the RSUP. During the staff meeting which was held on 08-07-11 from 10:00am in Case Two; all members were of the view that school uniform should be encouraged regardless of the problems which are encountered in acquiring and convincing parents/guardians to buy school uniform for their children.

On the views and opinions of the teachers; it has been discovered that in Case Two, the views of most teachers are that school uniform should be compulsory but on the side of those poor learners, they should find other means to find school uniform for the needy otherwise it is not good for some learners not to put on uniform while their friends are not. One of the teachers who also happened to be the head of the section, opinionated that, “school uniform should be compulsory for the following reasons like identification of pupils and pupils learn in an environment where everyone is equal.”

Teacher C in Case 2 also added the point that:

“School uniform should be compulsory for the following reasons; for the identification of pupils when out of the school premises, pupils feel are on the same level if they observe that everyone is wearing the same school uniform, children look smart and neat in school uniforms, and school uniform is deemed cheap than ordinary clothes and it is easy to maintain because it is made out hard fabric and locally available resources like cotton cloth. Furthermore, there should be some measures put in place to allow those learners who could not afford to buy school uniform to acquire it easily, for instance at this school the teachers thought it proper and good to buy school uniform for a certain physically challenged learner who showed great capabilities in class. As one way of showing appreciation the teachers bought him a school uniform” (Teacher C, Case 2)

The head teachers view on the issue of school uniform was that:

“All learners should be in school uniform; in other words school uniform should be compulsory like the old times before the implementation of the revised school uniform policy (1994). The head teacher also noted that the frequent changes in both the policies and the dress will always confuse the parents and guardians. So the government/ministry should come up with one policy and stick with that to avoid the confusion” (Head teacher, Case 2).

Furthermore, the head teacher insinuated that there is need to adopt the bottom-up policy implementation theory which starts out with the identification of actors involved in concrete policy delivery at the “bottom” of the politico-administrative system. Analysis

then moves “upwards” and “sideways” in order to identify the networks of implementing actors and their problem-solving strategies (Pulzl, H and Trieb, O, 1999).

Teacher B School uniform should not be compulsory and Teacher C said it should be compulsory throughout. Teacher D said that according to the the reasons/advantages have already said she thought it was better for the policy to be revised so that school uniform should be totally compulsory without any additional clauses to it.

The head teacher was of the view that the policy (new revised) was very good. It brought a lot of liberty to all parents even though most could afford to buy school uniform. In the first instance, the policy was formulated to cater mainly for those pupils who could not afford to buy school uniform. However, this brought a lot of problems like; most parents and pupils abuse it by wearing inappropriate clothes and refraining from buying school uniform. On top of that, there is need for the policy to be explained and expounded clearly so that all should understand and that there should be no misunderstanding or any deliberate misinterpretation. It should keep more emphasis on the need and importance of school uniform.

In most cases studied, the head teacher and the PTA decided just to implement the policy as it is, that is, no school uniform no school. Furthermore, the head teacher said that the policy should be disseminated to all and sundry not just the DEM, or PEAs. The policy document should be given to the real implementers of the policy which in this case are the head teachers. Moreover the policy should be disseminated to all and in written form

not just by word of mouth. This is the reason why in all schools there is no document to act as a guide on the policy and therefore, there are a lot of misinterpretations and misunderstandings; so it is better if it was just compulsory. In the other way round, the head teacher implied that bottom-up theories should be adopted when implementing this policy as it will cater for all stakeholders and there will be no room for misunderstandings, misinterpretations or resistance to the policy.

Teacher A said that uniform should be compulsory because of obvious reasons (identification of learners, all learners are on the same level). Furthermore, Teacher B, C and D were of the opinion that school uniform should be compulsory with the importance of school uniform in mind like identification and that all learners looks like they are on the same level.

The head teacher also gave the views and perceptions of the parents and the whole community. He said that they received it with open hands/mind because they understand the importance of school uniform and they like it when they observe their children in school uniform. On top of that they like it mainly due to the intensive sensitisation program on the importance of school uniform by the head teacher and the PTA. Moreover, they like it since they are part and parcel (PTA) in the formulation of the manner in which the revised school uniform policy should be implemented at this particular school.

According to the meeting held on 29th June, 1999 in the staffroom from 11:25am chaired by the chairman (the head teacher). Some teachers voiced out their opinions that the school does not only cater for children of soldiers but also other poor parents who live in the villages around the barracks. So it is not easy for them to buy school uniform especially shoes. The head teacher pointed out that it is in rare occasion when they have such cases but however if the situation crops up, it will be looked into accordingly but at the meantime, let the situation be as it is; school uniform daily except on Wednesdays.

On the views and opinions of teachers; the teachers at this school (Case Three) agreed more on the issue of school uniform that it should be mandatory. School uniform should be compulsory even though it brings in freedom of dressing it also brings in a lot of misconceptions and confusion. For instance, learners/ parents fail to come up with a suitable type of clothes to wear to school apart from the school uniform.

This view is also echoed by the head teacher at Case Three who said that “school uniform should be compulsory because it gives the learners an identity, learners have the same clothes and learners would not feel embarrassed of their poor quality clothes.”

In Case Three, Teacher C said that “school uniform should be compulsory since poor learners stand out in a group if they don’t have school uniform. She also said that she had observed that when pupils are in school uniform they have a feeling that they are on the same level with their peers.”

Teacher D in Case Three argued that:

“School uniform should be compulsory with regard to the advantages of school uniform. Furthermore, it is very embarrassing to both the teachers and pupils themselves when they go to functions attended by all schools in their zone. Other schools look good in their uniform and they look smart and orderly. They (teachers and learners) are often demoralised by just looking at their fellow schools smartly dressed in school uniform. He continued by adding that it does not come as surprises when they compete with them they often lose the games because they had already been demoralised. Pupils also remark that their school seems as if it is from the very remote area of the district while in actual fact it is within the trading centre all because of lack of school uniform” (Teacher D, Case 3).

The head teacher was of the opinion that school uniform should be compulsory “because it gives the learners an identity, learners have the same clothes and learners would not feel embarrassed of their poor quality clothes.” In this case; all teachers agreed with their head teacher on the view that school uniform should be compulsory. For instance, Teacher C argued that it should be compulsory since poor learners stand out in a group if they don’t have school uniform but when in uniform they have a feeling that they are on the same level. Teacher D argued that it should be compulsory with regard to the advantages of school uniform (which are many). He said that:

“It is very embarrassing to both the teachers and learners themselves when we go to functions attended by all schools in our zone. Other schools look good in their uniform and they look smart and orderly. We (teachers and learners) are often demoralised by just looking at our fellow schools. It doesn’t come as surprises when we compete with them we often lose the games because we are already demoralised. Learners remark that their school seems as if it is from the very remote area of the district while in actual fact it is within the trading centre all because of lack of school uniform” (Teacher D, Case 3).

The individuals’ teachers’ views/opinions did not always tally with the way the schools (cases) were implementing the RSUP. Some teachers were backing the way their

administration were implementing the RSUP, while others were against it and even some distanced themselves from the way the RSUP was being implemented in their particular schools(cases).

4.5.6 Human rights as a factor affecting school uniform policy

Some teachers agreed with the manner in which the school uniform policy was implemented in Case Four where school uniform is mandatory. While some teachers pointed out that it was not proper and good as it infringed on the right to education and dressing of the learners. According to staff meeting held on 04-06-09. So it was not all teachers who were backing this way of implementing RSUP. Teacher A was of the view that “school uniform should not be compulsory because it will be like a limiting factor to learners and with the issues of democracy and human rights; it will not go well with the majority of people who are sensitive on these issues.

Furthermore, there should be some measures put in place to allow those learners who could not afford to buy school uniform to acquire it easily, for instance at this school the teachers thought it proper and good to buy school uniform for a certain physically challenged learner who showed great capabilities in class. As one way of showing appreciation the teachers bought him a school uniform.” Teacher C in Case C also added that it is not proper to combine issues of democracy and human rights with school uniform”. His words were also echoed by the Teacher D of the Case 2 who said that it should be compulsory where every learner should be forced to wear school uniform without consideration of their human rights.

In Case Two, Teacher A pointed out that “school uniform is very good and it is a necessity. However, it should not be as a barrier to learning of learners as they are forced to buy school uniform as some are poor and orphans. He also pointed out that school uniform should not be compulsory because it will be like a limiting factor to learners and with the issues of democracy and human rights at present, it will not go well with the majority of people who are sensitive on these issues.

In Case Three, the head teacher of the school observed that “education is the right for every child and no one should be denied his/her right to education”. That is why they implemented it this way so that they could allow all learners to attend classes whether they have school uniform or not which is in line with the universal goal of education.

The head teacher and members of the school treat all pupils equally since they know the futility of enforcing school uniform as the members of the community surrounding the school are difficult on this issue. However, some members of staff still favour those pupils in school uniform and they are regarded as their favourite in the class. For instance, when I observed a certain class, the teacher would always send pupils in school uniform on small errands like to go to the staff room to collect books or chalk. Even answering questions in class, the teachers would most of the times point those in school uniform to answer their questions. This was observed in three lessons conducted by different teachers (STD 1, and 4).

The school authorities does not take into consideration the issue of human rights just because it is a within a military institution where people just follow orders from above and no questions. It is within this mentality perspective that parents or guardians do not even question the way RSUP is implemented in this case. Teacher C objected to the whole idea by stating that “if a school fee was abolished because learners failed to pay, why not school uniform?” He further elaborated that school uniform should not be compulsory as it is a burden on innocent people as previously children failed to learn because of school fees and that is why the government abolished school fees in primary schools and in the long run school uniform. It was infringing on the right to education of the children.

4.5.7 Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation procedures

Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation procedures refers to the absence of monitoring and evaluating procedures of the policy. In this case, monitoring and evaluation procedures involve the policy makers/formulators to check all the stages and processes of the policy from formulation to implementation.

The head teacher in Case One said that they have had no follow ups on the policy such as visits from the higher authority like PEAs, DEMs, etc. to inspect on the way the revised school uniform policy is implemented. The other participants supported this point only that it is the head teacher who is in the fore front advocating and encouraging school uniform. This was also true to other participants who narrated that there has not been any

case of the PEA, DEM or Ministry of Education officials coming to visit their school with emphasis on the revised school uniform policy.

The head teacher in Case Two said that there has not been any follow ups or monitoring of the policy and in fact the last inspection team visited the school in 2005; but not for school uniform policy specifically. The authorities who visit the school (Case Two) are usually either the PEA or the DEM and as already stated, their main concern is not school uniform but other school matters.

In the case of inspection specifically for revised school uniform policy, the head teacher (Case Two) pointed out that there has never been such a case. However members of the inspection teams who visit the school on general inspection duties would comment now and then on the uniform of learners. Like for instances why is it some learners are putting on school uniform while others are not. The usual answer is always about the revised school uniform policy. Members of the inspection team would always insist that learners should be encouraged to wear school uniform. Upon interviewing other participants (teachers) the clearly stated that the higher authorities have not come to their school to inspect or follow up on the way the revised school uniform policy is being implemented or to find out any problems encountered after the implementation of the school uniform policy.

In Case Two, the staff secretary documented the issue of the inspection team which observed that; there were no regular staff meetings because the school is supposed to

have staff meetings for a minimum of once per month. The inspection team also noted that the pupils were dressed inappropriately, that is, some (majority) were in school uniform while some few were not in school uniform and had put on clothes which were not fit for school. This shows that even the ministry officials were confused about the whole issue of RSUP because they were on a better position to understand the consequences and implications of the RSUP. Nothing much was discussed during the infrequent staff meetings; this is attributed to the fact that since the policy was introduced in 1994, it has now been the norm and tradition of the school to strongly encourage school uniform. Effort to access other staff meeting minute books proved futile as other documents had gone missing.

4.5.8 Misinterpretation and understanding of the RSUP

This involved the community (parents, guardians) which deliberately misinterpreted or misunderstood the policy (RSUP) to their own advantage or reasons best known to themselves. This problem was experienced in Case Three only.

In this school (Case Three) the reaction among pupils is carefree as most of them put on anything they deem suitable for school and no one questions anyone about what they have worn. At this school, pupils put on school uniform out of their own volition after understanding the importance of school uniform. This is so because when the school authorities try to enforce the policy of wearing school uniform, the community is resistant buying school uniform while others bring in their petty reasons that school uniform is no longer necessary and it has been abolished by the government.

In Case 3, the head teacher elaborated at length on the issue of school uniform. At this school, school uniform is encouraged but not so strongly as other schools. School uniform is almost nonexistent among learners. The head teacher pointed out that:

“It is all because of the community (parents/guardians) who are problematic. The community does not like to shoulder any extra costs related to education of their children. As most of them come around Mvera trading centre, most of them are business minded and they calculate anything in terms of loss and profit, so buying school uniform to them is a loss. Most of them misunderstand the revised school uniform policy as they think that government has abolished the wearing of school uniform for good. While others understand the revised school uniform policy very well but tend to hide behind the issues of democracy, human rights and the right to education of their children in order to run away from buying school uniform” (Head teacher, Case 3).

The perspectives of resistance to change are dominant at this as parents are using any ploy available to them to resist the RSUP. So with the above issues at hand, the head teacher decided to just simply encourage learners to buy school uniform by highlighting the advantages of school uniform. For instances during assemblies, the head teacher would pick out a learner who has put on school uniform and point out how s/he is looking presentable in the hope that other learners will be impressed and buy their own school uniform.

According to staff meeting held on 22-04-2010 in Case Three; the head teacher and the members of staff pointed out that they would have wanted to make school uniform compulsory at their school because of the many advantages of school uniform. However, they are let down by the community which is adamant to change and their misconception of the Revised School Uniform Policy which to them means school uniform has been abolished in all schools.

In Case Three the policy is also implemented in this way because members of the community regard it as being fine with them since most of them were actively in the process of adopting the school policy by looking at it from all angles and coming up with one stand or decision. This collective decision was reached through the meetings parents had with members of the community. On the other hand, the school authorities (the head teacher) decided to adopt this policy because on part of pupils, they like it since it gave them freedom buying school uniform dress and giving their children an opportunity to learn at the same time.

Moreover, the parents also play an important role in the way RSUP is implemented at Case One. This is shown when they are happy with the “anything goes” policy adopted by the school authorities on the RSUP. This is so since they have a lot of leeway like whether to buy or not buy school uniform depending on their financial standing in the society.

The head teacher in Case Three also explained that most parents or guardians like it the way it is without forcing learners to put on school uniform while others would like school uniform to be compulsory. However, they have to follow the rules set by the government.

4.5.9 Ownership of the schools

The cases had various owners as follows; Case One was a government controlled school located in the remote area; Case Two was a mission controlled school because it was located within the mission premises and many of its facilities were constructed by the

mission. Case Three was a government controlled school and located within the trading centre of the area. Case Four was a military controlled school because it was located within the military camp, the facilities were constructed by the military and some of the teachers were soldiers.

4.5.9.1 Case 1: Government controlled school

At these schools, the school authorities do not enforce school uniform with the reason that, they are afraid of the government authorities and the community surrounding those schools. Moreover, the school authorities at these schools are easily swayed by the community in the way how to implement RSUP. This has already been discussed in Case Three where most of the views of the parents and guardians are considered when making decisions on school uniform. In addition to that, On top of that, the schools use laissez-faire approach to implement this policy (RSUP) as it does not empower them to chase learners not in school uniform as they are allowed only to encourage the wearing of school uniform. This problem is augmented by the lack of supervision/follow up on the policy.

4.5.9.2 Case two: Mission controlled school

At this school; the authorities regard it as a semi-private school, that is, it is partly controlled by the Nkhoma CCAP Synod mission and the other part by the government. With this view in mind, the school authorities draw their authority from the mission. This is why some learners not in school uniform are sent back to wear school uniform. Moreover, the school authorities are influenced by the catchment area of the school. The

area around the school is mainly composed of poor families. So in order to accommodate these poor families, that is why their imposition of school uniform is selective as poor learners are given a lot of leeway compared to their fellow learners. This obviously brings tension among learners as others are seen as being favoured.

4.5.9.3 Case three: Government controlled school

In this school uniform is not mandatory and the school authorities do not enforce the wearing of school. The school authorities only encourage learners to put on school uniform by citing the advantages of school uniform and the disadvantages of not wearing school uniform. The school authorities could not go further than encouraging learners to put on school uniform because the community is adamant on providing school uniform for their children and they try to be in line with the RSUP which stipulates that schools should just encourage learners to put on school uniform not forcing them.

4.5.9.4 Case four: Military controlled school

School uniform at this case is mandatory because the school is owned by the military. So in most cases it is the military which directs on the manner the school is run. The head teacher elaborated on how their version of school uniform policy is implemented. He said that the procedure is as follows: the head teacher will consult with the concerned parents and if the parent is adamant, the head teacher will inform the PTA who will consult and sensitise the parent on the importance of school uniform. If everything fails, they will consult the Battalion Second in Command (since it is a military school and 99% of the pupils at this school are children/wards of soldiers) who will order the parent to acquire

the uniform. Furthermore the BN 2IC would buy the uniform for the pupil and deduct the cost of the uniform from the parents (soldier's) salary. But so far no parent has ever had his salary deducted for failing to buy school uniform because soldiers are afraid to taint their record as this can be seen as irresponsibility on the part of the soldier/officer. This is according to Defence Force Act and Regulations section 72 which culminates to scandalous conduct of an officer. The section states that, "every officer subject to military law under this Act, who behaves in a scandalous manner, unbecoming the character of an officer, shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction by court-martial or by the High Court, be cashiered....."

Teacher C explained that the issue of school uniform at his school obviously originated from the fact that the institution is a military school and in the military uniform plays a major role in its day to day undertakings. Moreover in the military they just obey orders from above and that is one of the reasons that made school uniform to be compulsory at their school.

In all the cases, it has been observed that it is the duty of the head teacher to implement the RSUP with its variation according to the consensus of the members of staff or the directive from the school authorities. In this case all teachers are expected to make sure that everyone has put on school uniform except those who could not afford to do so. Furthermore, they must make sure that those learners not in school uniform have put on clothes deemed fit for school and also that their clothes are neat and smart. All in all, the

teacher's duty is simply to check the dress code of the learners and make sure that it is clean and neat. In other words implement what has been discussed and agreed.

In military controlled school, it was discovered that the school authorities insisted on school uniform with disregard to the conditions given by the RSUP on school uniform. This can be attributed to the fact that the military value uniform or uniformity in all their activities. That is why the habit is spilling over to the school. Another factor which had propagated the use of school uniform throughout is the mentality of that the boss is always right and the juniors must follow the orders from their bosses without question. This is why when the head teacher and teachers who are military personnel impose this rule on learners. On top of that, the school authorities regard their schools as being semi-autonomous, that is, they are partly governed by the rules and regulations from the Ministry of Education while at the same time, and the bigger part is controlled by the military.

4.5.10 Consequences due to the variations in the implementation of the revised school uniform policy

With the introduction of the RSUP, there are a lot of problems faced at Case One. Teachers said that pupils not in school uniform and those in torn or dirty clothes always try to isolate themselves and they have doubts in their capabilities in class. Teacher B in Case One narrated an incident where there was a case of one family which transferred their children from one school to their school because in their previous school the children were required to put on school uniform which was also expensive because at that

school they had a private supplier for school uniforms whose prices were exorbitant. But the teacher emphasised the point that it was just one isolated incident which normally do not occur at their school. Teacher C in Case One added that, “most pupils do not take transfers as such but they prefer/choose their school other the other school (Case Four) because their school does not force pupils to put on school uniform.” This can be attributed to the interpretative approach to policy implementation framework where focus is on values, beliefs, and feelings as a set of meanings, and from a view of human behaviour as, ideally, instrumentally and technically rational to human action as expressive (of meaning)” (Pulzl, and Trieb,1999).

In Case One, Teacher D pointed out that pupils who have put on school uniform and expensive clothes usually mock their friends not in school uniform or are putting on sub-standard clothes, dirty or torn clothes. On top of that, pupils not in school uniform complain about their parent’s inability to buy them school uniform though they the pupils desire it much.

In Case Two when it comes to answering questions in class as learners feel like the teachers are in favour of those pupils in school uniform of those who are properly dressed. This is to them a form of psychological torture in class. Most teachers would favour those pupils in school uniform to do simple errands for them. For instance, in most classes I observed, the teacher will choose learners in school uniform to clean the board, fetch chalk and books at the staff room or even read aloud from their pupils book.

Even during the time the school was nominating prefects; it only those who are in always dressed smartly and in school uniform who were nominated for the different position in the school prefecture. This was solicited from Teacher C whom, I asked to point out students who have been nominated for different positions.

In Case Two, There was resistance as learners are sent back to wear school uniform especially to those who are capable. Resistance comes in the way some learners decide not to wear school uniform claiming that it is torn or dirty. Furthermore, Teacher A also observed that “some pupils resist the manner in which the RSUP is implemented at this school by the wearing of big shots with a lot of pockets; this is done especially to those who are allowed to wear clothes rather than school uniform.

In Case Two, Teacher B pointed out that:

“The problem they face mainly concern negligence of wearing uniform of some learners who have school uniform. When they are chasing those not in uniforms they tend to ask about others (poor) who are not in uniform but have not been chased. Others complain about the style of the uniform, they would like it to be changed according to contemporary fashion especially girls” (Teacher B, Case 2).

This is always regarded as normal according to the resistance to change theory where resistance to change is a natural reaction of individuals and social systems originating from the need for a relatively stable situation (Gravenhorst, 2003).” Furthermore, as resistance is part and parcel of any policy implementation as “change disrupts our expectations and produces a loss of the psychological equilibrium we value. Human inertia makes people cling to certainty and stability” (Gravenhorst, 2003).

In Case Two, some learners show some deviant behaviour in the way they wear the school uniform like for instance; not tucking in the shirts, unbuttoning the shirts and some learners question the logic and fairness of sending them away while their friends who have not put on school uniform are learning..Learners (in Case Two) who had put on school uniform regarded themselves as being superior to their fellow learners not in school uniform. For instance, some learners in school uniform will be in the fore front to draw the attention of their teachers in pointing out learners (deviants) not in school uniform. There was a case which I observed some learner pushing their fellow learner out of the assembly line just because he had not put on a school uniform. Although the learner tried to defend himself that he doesn't have a school uniform; some students pointed out that it a lie since he wore it the previous Friday as it was a Monday. This issue was aggravated because the school authorities chase out all students who have the school uniform and have left it behind. So the learners felt it as their duty to point out these deviants. That is why most of the times pupils who are not in school uniform will be found at the back of the class or assembly to avoid detection by the school authorities.

At this school(Case Two) there is a clear divide in the interaction of learners as learners in school uniform will most of the times be seen with their fellow learners in school uniform; similarly; learners not in school uniform will be in their own group. This discriminates against those not in school uniform since they are in minority and they come from poor families as they are unable to buy school uniform.

In Case Two, the majority of learners in school uniform are the girls as most boys are said to be delinquents. For more than three times during the assembly, I witnessed the head teacher chasing boys who have not put on school uniform for the simple reason that they had forgotten to wear or wash the school uniform. Of the few girls who were sent out was due to the fact that they are capable of buying the school uniform not for the petty reasons like it is torn or dirty.

On the other hand, in Case Three, learners who have not put on school uniform felt neglected and were always in the background of the main activities being carried at the school. On the part of the teachers there are no obvious signs of segregation on whether the learners have put on school uniform or not. This is due to the fact that there is a free for all attitudes on school uniform and it is only those parents and teachers who are knowledgeable enough about the benefits of school uniform that acquire school uniform for their children.

In Case Three, the head teacher said that the problems faced from the parents point of view include; reluctance of parents to buy uniform even though they could afford, feelings of embarrassment for those not in uniform, during inter-school activities our school feels isolated and suffer from inferiority complex. This is so because other school in the zone had adopted the school uniform as mandatory and others are strongly encouraging their pupils to buy/wear school uniform at all school activities within the school or outside the school.

Teacher D from Case Three said “some parents have trouble in identifying appropriate clothes/dressing for their children to wear to school. Learners wore baggy shirts and shorts; short skirts for girls, dresses or skirts with a lot of decorations as if they are going to a party or a certain celebration.”

In Case Three, Teacher B also added on the point that:

“The head teacher actually consulted the members of the staff and the community. However, the problems came from the community which is always adamant when it comes to buy school uniform. They insist that government has abolished school uniform, which is most of the times a deliberate misinterpretation of the revised school uniform policy in order to run away from the responsibility of buying school uniform. The head teacher and members of staff are very willing to strongly encourage learners to wear school uniform but are faced with setbacks from the community which is always confrontational and unwilling to understand school issues” (Teacher, B, Case 3).

The same issue of lack of understanding by the community was also presented by Teacher C in Case Three where she said that pupils accuse each other when someone puts on an improper dressing apart from school uniform. For instance learners will accuse each other when girls/boys have put on dresses with short sleeves, big shorts with a lot of pockets, sportswear e.tc. Some people in the community are very understanding while others gave lame excuses like poverty which has led them not buy school uniform yet they are able to buy other clothes at a higher price. She said that:

“For example a pupil was sent home once for improper dressing and the parent came at the school to shout at the head teacher and all members of staff for sending their child out of school yet school uniform had been abolished by the government” (Teacher C, Case 3).

Teacher D in case Three had observed that parents complain that they should be told or encouraged about school uniform when they are in the harvesting period not in the middle of the growing/rain season. They complain that they don't have money to do so at that time (rain season) as it is ill timing on their part because most of their money goes to farming during that time. As already stated this is one the tenets of resistance to change theory where resistance is inevitable psychological and organizational response that seems to apply to any kind of change, ranging from rather modest improvements to far-reaching change and organization transformation. Change and resistance go hand in hand: change implies resistance and resistance means that change is taking place. This also shows that with time parents and guardians may accept the RSUP fully mainly with the help of the administrative will which at present is lacking. The head teacher in Case Three also pointed that the main problem encountered by the school is when the school would try to enforce school uniform like when learners have put on improper dressing, the parents will resist.

In Case Three, Teacher A who also happened to be the deputy head teacher at this school pointed out that most of the times, learners mock each other over the state of the clothes worn by others in class especially to those who wear school uniform or clothes which are torn or ill fitting. Some learners laugh at their friends in such type of dress. Teacher C also added that; for those who opt to buy school uniform they don't have any problem, but those who buy ordinary clothes will now and then buy improper dressing which is not allowed at school and are the sources of major problems associated with dressing. Teacher D in Case Three had observed that some learners felt discouraged with the policy

implementation. This happens when some pupils were not wearing school uniform or neglecting to wear it.

In Case Three, most of the documents were not available but the few that were analysed contained one issue on school uniform. The issue on school uniform was discussed on the staff meeting held on 22-09-09 in STD 4. At this meeting the members asked the head teacher to sensitise the community on the need/importance of school uniform because it seems that the community is ignorant on the issue of school uniform. They understand the new school uniform policy to mean that no more school uniform and pupils can wear whatever they want to class. This point was raised after an incident last term where a certain pupil wore a baggy pair of shorts with a lot of pockets and the class teacher had to send the child home to wear proper clothes fit for school. This did not go well with the concerned parent who accused the teachers of breaking the ministry of education rules and regulations since the ministry had abolished school uniform and allowed pupils to wear anything.

The head teacher promised to look into the issue by sensitising the community and she also urged teachers to be a little bit tolerant to the dressing of their pupils in class.

On the staff meeting held on 06-06-10, in Case Three the head teacher was rebuking some teachers who were taking the law in their own hands by chasing learners without school uniform. There and then the head teacher informed members that school uniform is not mandatory but learners and parents should be encouraged to wear and buy it respectively. The head teacher further elaborated that the issue had already been

discussed at length with the members of the school committee. Moreover, it was the members of the school committee who brought out this issue that some teachers were chasing learners without school uniform. Some members of staff defended themselves that they did not send those pupils away but only told those students who had school uniform to go back and wear the school uniform which they had left at home.

In Case Three, it is the younger learners who opt to put on school uniform and their ages range from 5-10 years old (In the infant and junior section). On the other hand, the older learners, (senior section) especially boys, prefer to put on other clothes other than school uniform. Most of the times, these boys put on inappropriate types of clothing even with the introduction of the new revised policy where pupils are not chased because of lack of school uniform. They put on long pairs of shorts which are buggy. Some of these shorts look like a combination of a trouser and a pair of shorts, so that it is difficult to differentiate between the two. See the picture in figure 0.3.



Picture 0.3: *Standard 8 learners in Case Three: coming out of their classes ready to go for a lunch break*

In Case Four, the head teacher said that the problems they face in line with the way they implement the RSUP are due to lack of understanding by some parents on the importance of school uniform in the learning process of their child/ward. All the learners are in school uniform as shown in the picture in figure 0.4.



Picture 0.4: Standard 1 learners in Case Four: waiting for their teacher to start an outdoor class

A few problems exist in Case Four where some parents are unwilling to buy school uniform. They actually need a lot of pressure from school and working place (the threat that they will be reported to the BN2IC) in order for them to buy school uniform. The head teacher also gave an example of those learners coming from other schools especially on transfers. The parents are reluctant to buy a new school uniform for the new school as they argue that they had already bought a school uniform from the previous school. Other problems encountered include; lack of understanding by some parents; pupils who have no school uniform feel isolated from their peers; and it is time consuming for the head teacher and the PTA to sensitise parents on the importance of school uniform. For

instance seeking the intervention of the BN2IC on parents who default from buying school uniform.

The head teacher in Case Four explained that pupils are flexible; they are able to adapt to any change so there is no problem from the pupils. The interaction amongst them is good since they have put on the same clothes (uniform). The head teacher added that on Wednesdays when pupils do not put on school uniform. The interaction among pupils was always strained. Some pupils tend to isolate themselves from their peers who have put on expensive clothes. But on other days the interaction is good.

Teacher C in Case Four elaborated the point that there are no exact cases of dropping out or absenting themselves from school. However, many especially for those coming the villages around the barracks opt to register to other schools near them because they know that in Case Four they will be forced to buy school uniform. The no uniform, no school policy acts as a burden to them that was why most of them would prefer to register to other schools where school uniform is not compulsory. In line with this, there have been some cases where some learners have transferred to other schools nearby because of lack of school uniform. So in summary this could be attributed to the economic background of the parents. This clearly presents the situation where the learners and parents are also applying the principles of rational choice theory. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals. Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate

that which will be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Heath, 1976). Parents here decide to go to school which do not force learners to put on school uniform according to their financial capability.

On the point of forcing parents to buy school uniform, the head teacher in Case Four clarified that there hasn't been any incident in which the pupil or the parent had withdrawn his child from school because of school uniform or the manner in which they are implementing the school uniform policy at their school. He further elaborated that this is so because of the comprehensive sensitisation by the head teacher and the PTA on the importance of school uniform. He further elaborated that on the good points he presents to the parents is that school uniforms are cheaper compared to other clothes and they have only to buy one school uniform which will be used four days of the week.

Teacher A in Case Four narrated that at their school only those learners who are dependants (orphans and distant relatives) not sons/daughters of the parents (soldiers) face problems in acquiring the school uniform but real children of soldiers don't face any problems. So the problem here is more social than the RSUP implementation or variation in the implementation. Teacher B also added that other problems encountered are simple excuses like their uniform is dirty or torn mainly for those not willing to wear the school uniform.

Teacher D also pointed out that the problem of school uniform comes in at their school mainly through the process of defining the school uniform on its design and colour. In this it becomes a problem in trying to identify pupils who are putting on the recommended colour and design of the school uniform. For instances, some pupils will put on different sets of school uniform like the bottom which will be the recommended school uniform while the top will be something totally different from the appropriate school uniform of the school.

Some teachers in Case Four also pointed out that some learners are dropping out of schools or transferring to other nearby schools because they have failed to acquire school uniform. The head master said that so far he had not received any such kind of report. However he advised all members to report such cases to him so that the school can find solutions to the problem before the learner drops out or is transferred to another school (29-06-09).

All learners in case Four were mixing well in terms of school uniform (dressing) since uniform is mandatory. The observations I made for those learners who have come on transfer is that they isolate themselves from their friends since they are wearing a different uniform from their friends so they stand out as new comers. Most of them are also a source of jokes as other learners point out the funny school uniform they were putting on. For instance, I came across a new comer surrounded by his friends as they pointed out different parts of his school uniform and asking why all the different colours on the neck and arms. On Wednesdays, the situation changes because most pupils put on

different clothes apart from school uniform. The looks like some sort of a fashion show or a gala as most pupils are putting on clothes meant to impress others. Those pupils, who are poor, show some gloomy faces as they cannot compete with their peers in expensive clothes and on top of that, they seem to be inhibited in all their activities.

4.6 Similarities and differences among the cases

4.6.1 Similarities among cases

4.6.1.1 Qualification and experience of participants (teachers)

In all cases, the school heads were well qualified and experienced in their job. On the part of teachers they were also were qualified and experienced in their field of work. Most of the teachers in the schools had attended teachers training colleges with a minimum of two years. In all cases, the school authorities and teachers were also well conversant with the RSUP although the policy document was not available at the schools. The schools had also ample access to the PEA's and DEM's offices where they could easily access all education the policies.

4.6.1.2 Ownership of schools

In some case, the school heads were mainly concerned with what their controlling institutions directed them to do. Case 2 and 4 were managed by the mission and the Malawi Defence Force MDF respectively. These institutions followed the directives of their mother institutions regardless of other factors present on the ground. In both cases it was noted that the schools had their own way of dealing with the RSUP and its implementation problems. However, the most noteworthy point is that each case was

influenced by the owners of that school, for instance, in case 4, the school controlled by the military just followed orders from their superiors. Similarly in Case 2, which is managed by the church also followed instructions from the clergy on how to implement the RUSP? This behaviour fit in with the rational choice theory especially to the controllers of the school as they implement the RSUP according to the choices they deem fit for their schools, mainly in military and mission controlled schools (Cases Two and Four). In contrast, the other two cases which were controlled by the government, there is a laissez-faire attitude towards the whole process of implementing the RSUP. This is due to the way government handle issues of policies.

The other two schools (Case 1 and 3) did not have a clear explanation for why they implemented the policy in the way they did. This clearly indicates that the head teachers were implementing the policy basing on the calculation of the likely costs and benefits to them. In Cases 1 and 3, the implementation of the policy was solely dependent on the school head and his staff. There was no clear guiding framework as was the case in Cases 2 and 4.

4.6.1.3 Influence by the surrounding community

In all the cases the school administrators were concerned with and influenced by their surrounding community. For instance, if the parents said that they had no money to buy school uniform because it's rainy season (at the peak farming period), the school would bow down to their wishes. Similarly, if the community chose to misinterpret the RSUP like in Case 3 where the community insisted that school uniform had been abolished after

the introduction of the free primary education, the school would just comply and implemented the school uniform policy accordingly.

4.6.1.4 Knowledge of RSUP

In all cases, the head teacher and teachers agree with the school authorities on how to implement the RSUP at their particular school although some teachers object to how the policy should be implemented. The head teacher and the teachers in all the cases were not well conversant with the RSUP as the information regarding the policy was not well articulated. Head teachers and teachers learnt about the RSUP in a disjointed manner as most of them learnt about the policy through rumours. That is why there is no document on the RSUP in all the cases visited. So in part, the variations in the implementation of the policy were due to lack of proper documented knowledge of the policy.

4.6.1.5 Improper dissemination/implementation of the RSUP

In all the cases it was noted that the RSUP was not properly disseminated although head teachers and teachers were aware of the new policy. First of all, the policy formulators did not involve the policy implementers in the policy formulation. Moreover, before and after the policy was rolled out, there was need for the policy formulators to sensitise the school administrators, teachers and the community at large on the new policy. The policy implementation should have followed the bottom-up theory for the ease of implementation.

4.6.1.6 Interaction among learners

Interaction among learners is more relaxed in schools (Case 2 & 4) which force or strongly encourage learner to put on school uniform. As observed during non-participant observation, the atmosphere is different from other schools (Case 1 & 3) where wearing of school is rarely encouraged or not at all. In the schools of Case 1 and 3, the atmosphere is a little bit strained as learners are preoccupied with the clothes of their fellow learners. Furthermore, learners are concerned with what they wear or what their fellow learners are wearing. The same problems also occur in the literature review where peer pressure takes a major role in influencing the interaction among learners. Elder (1999) argued that students may be less distracted by their dress of their dress and the dress of their peers and be more focused on the learning process if students put on school uniform. Murray (2002) reports that school uniforms have been linked to increased self-esteem and confidence among students. He further writes that uniforms focus students' energy on learning rather than seeking peer approval for their outfits.

4.6.2 Reasons for differences among cases

4.6.2.1 Leadership styles

The most notable differences between the cases are on how they implement the RSUP. For instance, Case One, allows its learner to put on any cloth they deem fit at school. They use the *lassie faire* approach to the whole process of policy implementation. In Case Two, school uniform is strongly encouraged as learners are forced to put on school uniform in all school activities and those learners not in school uniform are sent back. Moreover in Case Two, those learners who could not afford to buy school uniform are

helped to acquire one. In Case Three, learners are also not forced to put on school uniform. The school authorities at this school only encourage learners to put on school uniform by emphasizing on its advantages. They follow mainly the wishes of the community around who most of the times are against the wearing of school uniform. In Case Four, the school authorities do not tolerate any learner not in school uniform. Any learner not in school uniform is sent back forthwith. The Administrators at this school are authoritative in a way that no learner is allowed to learn without school uniform. These leadership styles are the main contributing factors in the way RSUP is implemented in all the four cases. That is why there is a marked difference in the way RSUP is implemented in all the cases.

4.6.2.2 Location of the schools

Most of the times, it is the school in rural/remote areas which did not care much about what their learners are wearing to school. For instance, in Case 1(which is approximately 10 kms from the trading centre), learners are allowed to put on anything provided it is a cloth. While some schools (Cases 2, 3 and 4) which are in the proximity of the trading centre and the PEA's office are the ones which encourage the wearing of school uniform.

4.6.2.3 Economic status of the catchment area

The catchment area of the schools also plays a crucial role in determining the way RSUP is implemented in all the cases. Although the schools have different catchment areas, it is these catchment areas which dictate on how the RSUP will be implemented in each individual case. For instance, in Cases 2 and 4, school uniform is strongly encouraged

and forced because the catchment areas for these two schools consist of parents/guardians who are well-to-do. That is why when school authorities demand school uniform for the learners; it is easy for parents to adhere to the demands by the school administrators. In other school around the world (USA) is problematic. For instance buying school uniform can be a real financial strain and it is made even worse because a lot of schools are recommending just one supplier which often tends to be too expensive for the poorest families. A lot of these parents are going into debt to pay for their kid's school uniform instead of being allowed to get the uniform from cheaper places (Save the Children, n.d).

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the reasons that have led to variations in the implementation of the RSUP. Furthermore, specific reasons for variations in each case have been discussed. While drawing attention to notable patterns that stand out in the findings, the study provides a better understanding of why some cases still adhere to the old school uniform policy regardless of the RSUP. In general, it seems the school authorities and the communities surrounding the schools are the ones who bring about all these variations. The next chapter will discuss the lessons learnt; key conclusions, impacts and implications of the reasons for the variations in implementation of the RSUP and the recommendations from the study.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter makes conclusions based on the research questions that guided this study as stated in chapter 1. The main research question in this study was ‘what are the factors and reasons behind the variations in the implementation of the revised uniform policy in primary schools?’ The chapter also makes recommendations based on the research findings discussed in chapter 4 and finally suggests areas for further study.

5.1 Conclusions

The RUSP was being implemented in primary schools with a lot of variations. Some schools implemented it as it was supposed to be implemented, that is, they did not chase learners without school uniform. However they encouraged the wearing of school uniform in all school activities. In some schools, learners without school uniform were chased out of classes. Moreover, some schools to them school uniform was non-existent where they did not encourage wearing of school uniform or chase away learners without school uniform.

Schools interpreted RUSP in many ways. Some schools interpreted the policy as being inclusive to all learners (rich or poor) and that is it, it should not be prohibitive to any learner. While others interpreted it in a way that government had abolished school uniform in all government schools.

In some schools, they encouraged learners to have school uniform while not chasing them. Others the policy was no uniform, no school. The administrators of some schools were not concerned about what learners were putting on. There were many reasons which were cited for the variations in the implementation of the RSUP. Some of the reasons were; economic status of the families, improper dissemination of the information about the policy, lack of administrative will by school heads, PEAS and DEMS, implementation according to the advantages or disadvantages of school uniform, issues of human rights, lack of proper monitoring and evaluation procedures by the policy formulators, misinterpretation and misunderstandings of the policy, and ownership of school.

5.2 Key issues from the study

5.2.1 Factors and reasons for variations in implementation of the RSUP in the case study schools

From the results presented in chapter four, the following are the factors/reasons that resulted in the differences in the implementation of the RSUP in the four Cases under study:

- Economic status of the families/learners

- Improper dissemination of information about the policy
- Improper dissemination of information about the policy
- Lack of administrative will by the school heads, PEA's and DEM's
- Implementation according to the advantages/disadvantages of school uniform
- Opinions/Interferences of the stakeholders (parents/teachers)
- Regard/disregard of human rights of the learners in the implementation of the RSUP
- Lack of proper monitoring and evaluation procedures by the policy formulators
- Misinterpretations and understanding of the policy
- Ownership of some institutions (schools)

5.2.2 Consequences of variations in the implementation of RSUP

With the introduction of the RSUP, there were a lot of problems faced at Case One. Some of them were; pupils went to school in torn and dirty clothes and tended to isolate themselves; some pupils mocked each other especially where some pupils had put on substandard clothes; and some learners were admiring other schools where school uniform was not enforced.

In Case Two the problems were mainly as follows. There was favouritism by some teachers for learners in school uniform. These were sometimes given preferences over their peers not in school uniform. Resistance of learners to put on school uniform was rampant especially when some learners were spared from wearing uniform because of their economic status. Some learners in school uniform regarded themselves as superior to their peers not in school uniform. There was a clear divide between learners in school

uniform and those not in school uniform because this marked the socio-economic status of learners.

On the other hand, in Case Three, learners who had not put on school uniform felt neglected and were always in the background of the main activities being carried at the school. Other problems include; reluctance of parents to buy uniform even though they could afford it, feelings of embarrassment for those not in uniform during inter-school activities; the school feels isolated and suffer from inferiority complex, some parents have trouble in identifying appropriate clothes/dressing for their children so they wear inappropriate clothes to school like baggy shirts and shorts; short skirts for girls, dresses or skirts with a lot of decorations. Furthermore, the community around the school insists that government had abolished school uniform which was just a deliberate misinterpretation of the RSUP, and some learners would neglect wearing school uniform even though they own one or they are capable of acquiring one because they knew that they would not be chased out of school.

In Case Four, the problems they faced in line with the way they implement the RSUP were due to lack of understanding by some parents on the importance of school uniform in the learning process of their child/ward. Some parents were unwilling to buy school uniform. They actually need a lot of pressure from school and working place in order for them to buy school uniform. The parents are reluctant to buy a new school uniform for the new school as they argue that they had already bought a school uniform from the previous school. Other problems encountered include; lack of understanding by some

parents; pupils who have no school uniform feel isolated from their peers; and it was time consuming for the head teacher and the PTA to sensitise parents on the importance of school uniform. The interaction among learner was always strained on Wednesdays when some learners tend to isolate themselves from their peers who had put on expensive clothes.

5.3 Implications

The results of the study indicate a number of implications of school uniform on the teaching and learning process. Evidently, many learners are disadvantaged in the way RSUP is implemented in schools. In Case Four learners not in school uniform face a lot of discrimination in terms of being bullied by their fellow learners for not putting on appropriate clothes. Education authorities cannot ignore the above mentioned reality of school uniform in schools. The fact that negative labelling is part of the social reality for learners not in school uniform is a demonstration that school life is rife with practices which are impacting on their welfare, self-esteem and socialisation. So the best way is to formulate and implement a policy which does not allow any negative labelling. This will allow the learning and teaching process to take place without any interference.

The issue of discrimination raised above has a direct bearing on the teaching and learning process. Teaching and learning processes are a core business of school organisations, require an environment conducive to such activities. In a school context, unfriendly experiences lower the self-esteem of the individuals affected. When a learner experienced ostracism, a ripple effect occurs at the classroom level. It creates psychological stress

which often inhibits academic achievement. Furthermore, when school authorities and teachers as in (Case Two) engage in prejudicial behaviours, it not only sends a message to other learners that the behaviour can be emulated but also sends a message to victims that they are lesser than others. This impairs the victim's self perception. Thus the teaching and learning process does not take place.

On the part of learners themselves, school uniform or their dress code can also have negative implications on the way they learn and associate in school. For instance, in schools (Case One and Three) where school uniform is not mandatory, poor learners can be affected when they observe their fellow learners putting on expensive clothes. On the other hand, learners who cannot afford to buy school will also be negatively affected when their friends are in school uniform. So both ways the teaching and learning process will be negatively affected. Thus it is necessary for school authorities to find means of implementing the policy which is not discriminatory to other learner.

On the part of theoretical implications, that study dwelt much on the rational choice theory where the school authorities based their decisions on their choices or preferences depending on the environment of the institutions. For instance, in Case Four which is a military institution and Case Two which is a mission controlled school? In all the cases these choices affected the way in which the RSUP was implemented hence the many variations encountered in all the four cases. Further studies could also use rational choice theory mainly in determining how the implementers on the ground will implement the new policy before formulating the policy. Furthermore, the policy formulators should

also take into consideration the bottom-up approach when formulating policies. This approach will help formulators to understand the needs and preferences of the implementers before rolling the policy on the ground.

The implementation of the RSUP brought a lot of controversies instead of eliminating the problems it was intended to eliminate. As the policy was formulated as a support for the Free Primary Education policy so that learners should have no problems in access to education. The controversy was brought about by the way the policy formulated and implemented where some stages were violated like the inclusion of the policy implementers. This is according to the tenets of bottom up theories. Thus it was observed that the stakeholders/policy implementers chose to implement the policy in their own way using the tenets of rational choice theory where they looking at the beneficial ways to implement the policy. The end result was that each school implemented the policy in their own way with regard to the environment of each institution.

This study has explored the reasons behind the variations in the implementation of the RSUP. The study has linked the findings with rational choice theory which tries to elucidate the factors that prompts authorities to make certain policy decisions with or little regard to policy available on the ground.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

Research in Malawi has not explored the links between these factors/reasons and the methods/theories used in the formulation or implementation of the RSUP. Furthermore, less research has tackled the relationship of these variations in the implementation of the RSUP with drop out and absenteeism of learners. These are important areas for further research which could provide new insights in the field.

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have summarized the key issues presented in this study and implications for the study have been presented. In the study there were many factors and reasons which had contributed to the variations in which the RSUP had been implemented in four Case study schools. The most prominent factors, which are present in all cases, include; the catchment area of the school which determines how the policy was implemented. Different socio-economic backgrounds of learners played a major part. Control or ownership of the schools also dictated the way in which this policy was implemented. These factors not only had contributed to the way in which RSUP was implemented but also there had been some consequences associated with it. These consequences include; lack of understanding by some parents on the importance of school uniform in the learning process; deliberate misinterpretation of the policy in order to run away from the responsibility of buying school uniform; conflicts between teachers and parents/guardians as some teachers tried to control the dress code of learners. Although it seems that uniforms are a norm of school life, the results from the four Case study schools show

how policy implementation can have significant implications on how school uniforms can affect learning in schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

FROM: The Primary Education Advisor
Mvera TDC
P.O. Box 43
Mvera

TO: Head teachers
Mvera TDC Zone
Mvera

Date: 03 January, 2013.

RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Be informed that the bearer of this letter is Mr. H.E. Manthalu, a teacher at Mvera Army Secondary School. He is conducting a research on school uniform policy in our zone. He will require your assistance and cooperation during his research.

Thanks in advance for the assistance which you are going to render to him.

Yours sincerely,

P. Chidatha (PEA).

APPENDIX 2:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Main Research question

What are the factors and reasons behind the variations in the implementation of the revised uniform policy in primary schools?

The specific questions are:-

1. How do the schools interpret the school uniform policy?
2. What are the variations in the implementation of the RSUP?
3. What are the causes (reasons) of the variations in the implementing of the RSUP?
4. What have been the consequences of the variations in the implementation of the new school uniform policy?

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers)

1. Have you ever heard of the old and revised school uniform policy? If so what does it say?
2. How did you learn about the revised school uniform policy?
3. How do you understand or interpret the revised school uniform policy?
4. What made you implement this school uniform policy in the manner you are doing? **LIST** down reasons for doing so.

5. How did you disseminate the information about the revised school uniform policy to learners and the community as a whole?
6. Who is responsible for disseminating the information about the revised school uniform policy to the community?
7. Who is responsible for checking on pupils who have/have not put on school uniform?
8. Do head teachers conduct seminars/workshops on how to implement the revised school uniform policy?
9. What steps have been taken to sensitise the community about the revised school uniform policy and the manner in which it is implemented?
10. What kind of resistance did you encounter while implementing the revised school uniform in this manner?
11. What measures are put in place to deal with the resistance according to the style of your implementation of the revised school uniform policy?
12. How often do you enforce the dress code (uniform or not) in your school? i.e. daily, weekly, beginning of term etc.
13. How do you address the basic human rights concepts on the right to education (section 25 (i)) and the rights of children (section 23(4)-(b))?
14. Do the Ministry of Education officials (PEA's, DEM's etc) monitor the implementation of this policy? If yes, how often?

15. How did you formulate the rules on how to implement the revised school uniform policy in your school? (Staff meetings, seminars, workshop or individually).
16. What is the general reaction of pupils towards this policy with the view that school uniform is not mandatory?
17. How did the community embrace the manner in which you have implemented the revised school uniform policy?
18. What are the viewpoints of the community (learners, parents/guardians) in the manner you are implementing the revised school uniform policy?
19. What are the views of your members of staff on the way you are implementing the revised school uniform policy?
20. What kind of explanation do you give to the higher authorities (PEA, DEM) in the way you are implementing the revised school uniform policy?
21. How many students do you recorded absenting or dropping out of school because of lack of school uniform?
22. Can you tell me how the parents/guardians reacted to this directive from the school authorities with the view that school uniform is not mandatory?
23. Have you ever faced problems/consequences due to the manner you are implementing school uniform policy? If yes, **LIST** them down.

24. Do you have cases of learners transferring to other schools or coming from other schools due to the manner in which the revised school uniform policy has been implemented at your school?
25. Do parents/guardians face any problems due to the implementation of the revised school uniform policy?
26. Do you have any escalation or de-escalation of discipline cases after implementing the revised school uniform policy?
27. What is your view about the whole issue of school uniform policy in general?
Should it be continued or discontinued?

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (for members of staff)

1. Have you ever heard of the old and revised school uniform policy? If so what does it say?
2. How did you learn about the revised school uniform policy?
3. How do you understand or interpret the revised school uniform policy?
4. Who is responsible for checking on pupils who have/have not put on school uniform in your school?
5. Who is responsible for disseminating the information about the revised school uniform policy to the community?

6. Do you attend any seminars/workshops conducted by the school administrators on how to implement the revised school uniform policy?
7. What steps have been taken by your school to sensitise the community about the revised school uniform policy and the manner in which it is implemented in your school?
8. Who adapted/adopted/ignored the revised school uniform policy at your school?
9. Did the school authorities (head teacher and deputy head teacher) seek your views before implementing the revised school uniform policy in this manner?
10. What is your opinion on the way the revised school uniform policy is being implemented at your school?
11. What measures have been put in place by the school administrators to deal with resistance to the style of your implementation of the revised school uniform policy?
12. What is your role as a teacher/class teacher in the implementation of the revised school uniform policy?
13. What are the expectations of the school administrators for you as a teacher (i.e. class teacher) in the manner the revised school uniform policy is implemented in your school?
14. Do you face any problems in class in line with the way the revised school uniform policy is implemented in your school?

15. What are the reactions of the learners in the class on the revised school uniform policy is implemented in your school?
16. What are the reactions of the parents/guardians on the revised school uniform policy and the manner in which it is implemented in your school?
17. Do you have any learners absenting/dropping out of school due to the manner the revised school uniform school uniform is implemented in your school?
18. Do you have cases of learners transferring to other schools or coming from other schools due to the manner in which the revised school uniform policy has been implemented in your school?
19. Do parents/guardians face any problems due to the implementation of the revised school uniform policy?
20. What is your final opinion about the whole revised school uniform policy? Should it be continued or discontinued?

APPENDIX 3:

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE

(Adapted and modified from Ahmed, J.U. (2010).

Dates of the document	Frequency
Type of document	Staff meeting minutes; circulars, attendance registers
Unique characteristics of the document	Hand written/typed; stamped
Author/creator of the document	Position/title/appointment
Audience	Meant for whom? Personal/confidential/public
Document information(content)	Quotations from the document; questions answered and left unanswered by the document
Sources of the document	Public records, media, biography, visual documents, private papers

APPENDIX 4: NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION GUIDE

(Adapted and modified from Mack et al, 2005. Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collectors Field Guide) and Merriam (2009).

Appearance of learners	Clothing: learners wearing school uniform; learners not wearing school uniform; Age of learners: wearing and not wearing school uniform Gender of learners: wearing and not wearing school uniform
Verbal behaviour and Interaction of learners	Interaction: between learners wearing school uniform and those not wearing school uniform
Behaviour of head teacher and members of staff	Interaction: between head teacher/teachers and learners in school uniform or not
Physical behaviour and gestures	Head teacher/teachers towards learners in school uniform or not. Between learners wearing school uniform and those not wearing school uniforms. Activities: time and is it routine or typical?
Physical setting	How are the learners utilizing space (environment) and how does it affect them?