

STUDENTS' RESISTANCE BEHAVIOUR AS A FORM OF STUDENTS
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE CLASSROOM

M.ED. (SOCIOLOGY) THESIS

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M.ED. (SOCIOLOGY) THESIS

BY

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DECLARATION

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

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Full Legal Name

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

To my wife Rachael and our two children Pachalo and Frank and all the Kamadimba family. It is also in memory of my late father Maynard and my grandmother Rhoda.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to do a number of things: to identify the various forms of resistance behaviour in the classroom; to establish the causes of such resistance behaviour; to investigate how classroom teachers interpret resistance behaviours; and finally to explore how teachers deal with it.

The study was conducted in three purposefully selected secondary schools in Karonga district in the NED of Malawi. The schools were grouped as co-education and single sex. The data was collected using classroom observations, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and documentary sources. Fifty four (54) participants took part in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews while 437 were observed. The data collected were categorized into themes and quotations were made from interview notes.

Various forms of student resistance behaviours were identified. The causes of such behaviours were poor management skills and poor teaching. Teachers tend to interpret student resistance behaviours as childishness and a challenge to their authority, which must be punished.

The major conclusion of the study is that generally teachers fail to appreciate that apparently disruptive behaviours in the classrooms are attempts by students to communicate their feelings, attitudes and concerns in the context of institutionalized

dominance and subordination. This failure to appreciate the communicative role of disruptive behaviour is one of the contributory factors to the persistence of poor teaching and learning in the classroom.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DEM	District Education Manager.
EDM	Education Division Manager.
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
NED	Northern Education Division.
USA	United States of America.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

Origins of Formal Western Education in Malawi

Formal western education was introduced in Malawi by European missionaries. Missionaries of the Free Church of Scotland made the first attempts at formal education in 1875 at what is now known as Cape Maclear in Mangochi district. In that year classes were held to teach Africans in the vicinity of the mission station the alphabet and arithmetic in addition to the Christian gospel. Later, missionary groups such as the Catholic White Fathers and the Marist Fathers, the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), the Church of Scotland, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRCM) and the Seventh Day Baptist established their own schools. The intention was to use the schools as vehicles for evangelization. Education and Christianity were viewed by missionaries as important weapons in the fight against the evils of slavery, ignorance and inter-tribal wars (Nyirenda, 1987, Banda, 1982). The products of the mission schools were expected to serve the missionary enterprise primarily as teachers and evangelists.

Until 1926 when the first Department of Education in the country was set up, school education was dominated by the Christian missions, with each missionary group training its own teachers and developing its own curricula. From 1926 the colonial government began to provide grants to the missionary groups to assist with the running of the schools but not much else (Lamba, 1986:103).

The education that was provided by the missionaries emphasized Christian values as interpreted by the particular denomination. There was consensus, however, on the virtues of hard work and discipline. Discipline was interpreted as observance of rules and respect for those in authority. Corporal punishment was an accepted form of punishment. Teaching and learning, therefore, operated in an autocratic environment (Rotberg 2002:69). The Department of Education allowed missionary groups to run their schools much as they had done before its inception, and school education retained its autocratic nature. The autocratic nature of mission education reflected the traditions and practices in the British education system of the time.

Until 1940 when the protestant Scottish missionaries established Blantyre Secondary School, the emphasis in mission education work had been on primary education (Lamba, 1986, Banda, 1982). The products of the secondary education system were expected to fill middle level administrative posts in the expanding colonial administration.

Following the general elections of August 1961 which put the country on the path to self government and independence, Africans assumed control of many aspects of public affairs among which was education. Among the important changes that were instituted were the creation of a Unified Teaching Service (UTS) with teacher training controlled by the state, and a uniform curriculum which put emphasis on academic subjects rather than church doctrine. The Department of Education became the Ministry of Education and was headed by a Minister.

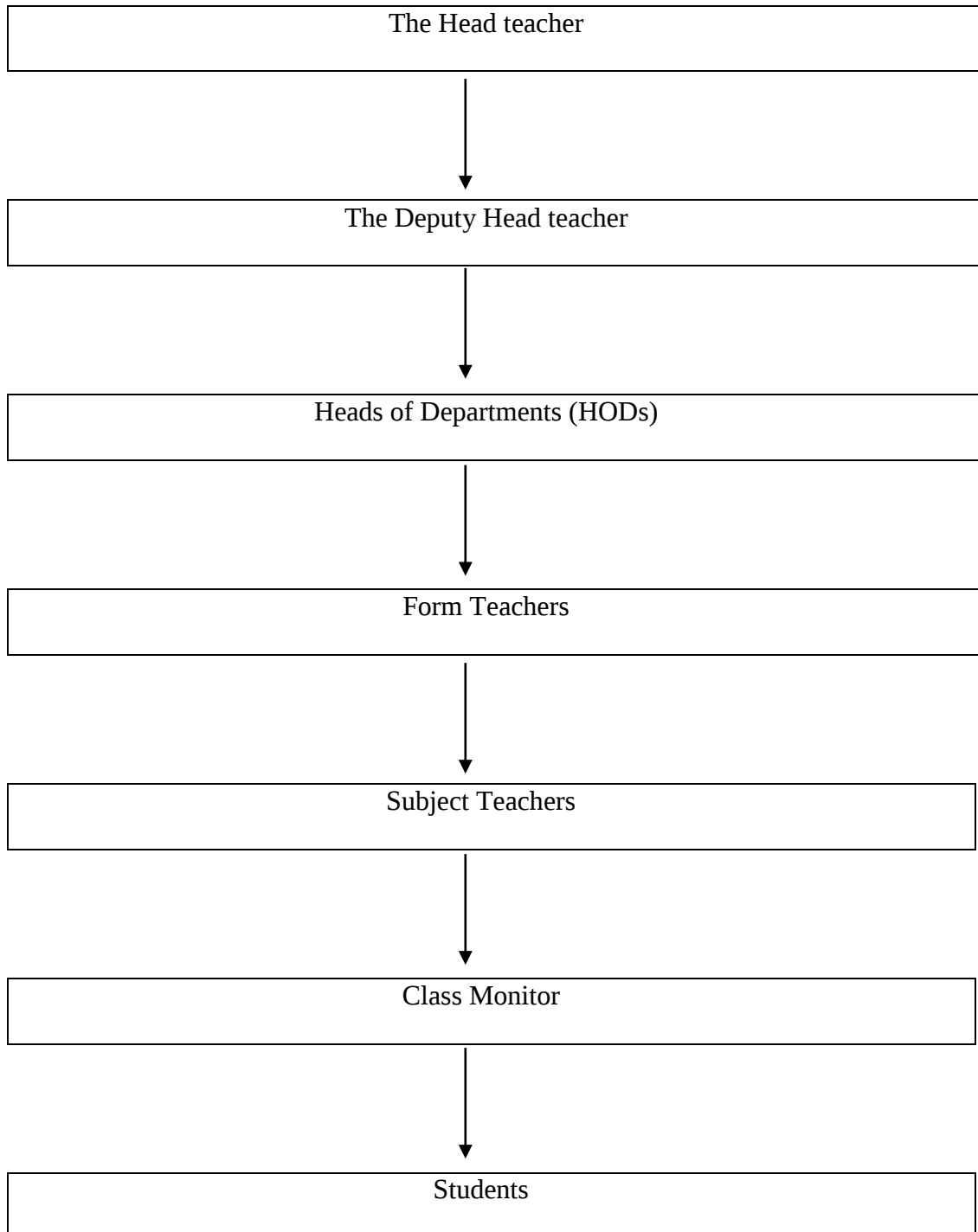
Education during the Post-Independence Period

Malawi became independent in 1964 under the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) led by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Two years later, the country became a republic. The late Dr Banda, who became the first President of the Republic, was a product of Scottish missionary education. He was imbued with the missionary values of hard work and discipline and sought to have them established beyond the school to the nation as a whole. Dr Banda's 30-year rule between 1964 and 1994 was characterized by exhortations for unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline. These four principles, according to Dr Banda, were the four cornerstones upon which the Malawi nation was founded. Discipline was defined, as respect for authority. The role of parents and teachers was viewed as helping young people develop into citizens who respected authority and obeyed established rules and laws (Chimombo, 1999: 19). The school was viewed as an important channel for transmitting the values of the leadership of the country. For example, the secondary school curriculum included Malawi Political History and Citizenship. This was invariably taught by a Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) instructor. Apart from physical education and camp craft, students were taught to be patriotic and to demonstrate unquestionable respect to those in positions of authority. The MYP instructor also served as "Discipline Master" in the school.

What emerges from a study of Malawi's education system is that teaching and learning in both the colonial and immediate post-colonial period occurred in an autocratic environment. The teacher played the dominant role as dispenser of knowledge and transmitter of dominant values and the students, the subordinate role of appreciative recipients of the dispensed knowledge and transmitted values (Rudduck, 1979). Figure

1 is a diagrammatic presentation of the authority structure in Malawian schools. In most cases information and directives tend to flow from the top to the lower rungs.

FIGURE 1: AUTHORITY STRUCTURE



1.2 Statement of the Problem

Following the transition from one party rule to a multiparty system of governance in 1994, many schools experienced unprecedented waves of indiscipline cases that resulted into the disruption of the teaching and learning process. There was unprecedented drunkenness, defiance of authority, vandalism, insolence, use of abusive language, assault and truancy. Kuthemba-Mwale et al (1996), Mpinganjira (1998), Musopole (2000), Machado (2006) and Malunga et al (2000) attributed this to a gross misunderstanding, misconception and misinterpretation of multiparty democracy and human rights. Kainja (1994) and Maluwa-Banda (1995), on the other hand, attributed indiscipline in schools to lack of effective guidance and counseling services in schools. The conclusions made by these authors, however, do not appear to be based on firm evidence.

In general, the above cited scholars have not attempted to analyze the apparent cases of indiscipline in the context of the dynamic situation where the principal actors, the teacher and the student, routinely interact and communicate with each other within the context of institutionalised dominance and subordination in the classroom.

This study, therefore, adopts the view that the classroom is an environment where teachers and students communicate with each other, not just the academic content of lessons, but also feelings, emotions and attitudes. For order to prevail, the forms and the manner in which this communication is made must be interpreted according to shared meanings. Where this is not possible, what may have been meant to be attempts to

communicate something important may be perceived by those in positions of power and authority as indiscipline.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate how teachers interpret and respond to the various forms and causes of students' resistance behaviours in the classroom.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this research study were:

- To identify the various forms of students' resistance behaviour adopted by students.
- To establish the causes of students' resistance behaviour in the classroom.
- To investigate how teachers interpret the various forms of the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom.
- To explore how teachers deal with the various forms of the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the post- structurist resistance theory. Resistance behaviour refers to the psychological survival tactics or as a means by which young people in a social control setting like classrooms, get by, get through, get out, make out or survive (Sanderson, 2002). Resistance theory is a subset of social critical theory (Levine and Havighurst 1989:254). According to Bennett (1990:24), social critical theory in education has its roots in a number of theoretical traditions. First, it combines both macro and microanalyses of social phenomenon. It uses the analytical basis and many

of the concepts of both functionalism and conflict theory. Like conflict theorists, critical theorists believe that inherent in any social organization are contradictions. Furthermore, social critical theorists also borrow from symbolic interactionism and phenomenology, since they believe that social reality is constructed and operates at multiple levels of meaning.

1.5.1 The Post- Structurist Resistance Theories and Their Contribution to Education

The post-structurist theory of resistance started emerging in the last several decades (Walkers, 1986). In this theory the central categories that emerge are principled stand, deliberate, intentionally, ideological, withholding assent, consciousness, purposefulness, the meaning of commonsense and the nature and value of non-discursive behaviour (Aronotowz and Giroux, 1986; Bennet, 1990). According to Abowitz, (2000), the post-structurist resistance theory generally attempts to explain why the opposition of some groups against others is politically and morally necessary in the social institutions where mainstream ideologies dominate. Similarly, the theory attempts to explain the ways in which students struggle against the norms or authorities that often seem to work against their perceived interests (Abowitz, 2000). In brief, this theory is concerned with the means by which young people in positions of subordination and powerlessness negotiate and manage vagaries of power and authority in control systems.

In education, the post-structurist resistance theory characterises students' resistance

behaviour to their teachers as socially constructed, interactive and agentic (Collins, 1995), existing in multiple forms (Ferrewell, 1995) and as an ideologically organized expression of power that is inherently political (Miron and Laura, 1995). According to this view, resistance is intimately connected with the formation of identity (Collins, 1995, Miron and Lauria, 1995). Miron and Lauria (1995) describe the relationship between student resistance and identity as specifically concerning a struggle for identity (self-definition).

In education, the theory has contributed to the body of knowledge concerning the issues and meanings of opposition and conflict present when marginalized individuals or groups in schools such as students speak or act out regarding their status, treatment, or relative position in the institution (Abowitz, 2000). According to the theory, the teachers' understanding of students' resistance behaviour in the classroom should begin from the ground of students' everyday life and from the fact that power is decentred and everywhere. Thus, people within different contexts that structure interacting relations of dominance and autonomy exercise power. Power is, therefore, "never one-dimensional; it is exercised not only as a mode of domination, but also as an act of resistance" (Abowitz, 2000). Thus, teachers and students can influence and be influenced by each other in their interactions.

This study adopts the view that the teaching and learning environment brings together two sets of actors who constantly communicate both verbally and non-verbally and seek to influence one another within a structured environment of dominance and

subordination where the meanings and symbols of communication may not always be shared by the actors.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it is probably one of the few attempts, if not the only attempt, to understand classroom discipline from a post- structurist resistance perspective in Malawi. It opens an area of research which has either hitherto been ignored or has received little attention.

It is hoped that the study may stimulate further research and action by different people who may wish to work out strategies to reduce the causes of indiscipline and poor learning in the secondary school classroom. This study, therefore, is an important contribution to the micro-sociology of education

1.7 Operational Terms

The key concepts and terms used in this thesis carry the meanings that are indicated against them.

- (a) Resistance behaviour means any instance of refusal, or deliberate failure to behave in an expected situation.
- (b) Indiscipline means a complex of instances of resistance behaviours considered to be undesirable by those in authority.
- (c) Communication strategy means the manner in which individuals in a social situation make their feelings and intentions known to others participating in it.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Forms of Students' Resistance Behaviour

Students' resistance behaviour in the classroom can take many forms. Students can act passively by mentally withdrawing and not attending to tasks. They may take a more active role by not completing required assignments or sometimes, outwardly protesting class activities.

Field and Olafson (1999) study of resistance behaviour in the American Middle School revealed that it took the form of refusal to work, expression of boredom and making fun of their teachers. Furthermore, it transpired in the study that students' forms of resistance behaviours are embodied in gesture and action due to the institutionalized dominance of the classroom teacher. The study further found out that skipping school is another classic form of resistance behaviour, which is a physical and symbolic withdrawal from school. However, the results of the study also found out that students who skip school are not necessarily resisting schoolwork. In the final analysis, the study makes three major conclusions. Firstly, there are different expressions of resistance behaviour and their multi-layered character, beginning with the aspects most visible and moving to those subtler. The study also concludes that there appears to be an unarticulated or embodied form of students' resistance behaviour that does not show itself but is expressed in more subtle forms of body language. For instance, sometimes students simply become silent and unresponsive to teachers. Finally, the study concludes that the forms of resistance behaviours in the classroom have the potential to

cause indiscipline, which can lead to vandalism and the general disruption of teaching and learning processes in schools if the authorities of the school do not properly interpret and deal with it at the onset.

Similarly, Bracha (1999) found that there are various forms of resistance behaviours in the classroom. Bracha's case study was on the three English classes in a College Preparatory in America. The focus of his research study was to find out what modes of resistance behaviours appear in the English language classes. In two of the three classrooms, some modes of students' resistance behaviours appeared. Unlike, Field and Olafson (1999), Bracha found deliberate limited participation in classroom discussions, silence and mumbling and frequent arguments with the teacher over perception of content and evaluation. On silence and mumbling, students did not respond to the teacher's questions that attempted to stimulate discussion. On occasions where students did react, the reaction was short and uttered in a quiet tone of voice that could be described as mumbling since the responses rarely reached the whole class; the teacher often had to repeat it aloud. The conclusion that was drawn was that forms of resistance behaviours do appear in the classrooms, which have the potential to degenerate into chaotic situations if the teachers who are teaching do not detect it as early as possible.

Concurring with the findings of Field and Olafson (1999) and Bracha (1999), Reichert and others (retrieved on 30th September 2006 from <http://writing.fsu.edu/fyw/tguide/p4aa.htm>) did a case study on understanding the various forms of students' resistance behaviour in the classroom. Reichert and others were graduate assistants teaching in the

1st year Writing Program at Florida State University. These graduate assistants were in a unique position to understand the issues of the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom because they were both students and teachers. In their study, they also found out that there were forms of students' resistance behaviours such as deliberate failure to attend classes, sitting at the back of the classroom with arms crossed and mouth tightly shut. Forms of students' resistance behaviours were also seen through the students' deliberate questioning of authority, by using their clothing and hair to show that they are counter-culture. In addition, the study also revealed that students deliberately resisted the authorities by failure to turn in the materials for the programs or refusing to attend workshops. The research study further revealed that much of the resistance is underground and is discussed outside the classroom since students often believe that they have very little power in the classroom due to the institutionalized dominance of the teacher.

Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) did a study of students' passive resistance in Indian Mission schools in America. The study found out that the children there are in many ways model pupils because parental discipline is strong and children are generally polite and restricted in the presence of adults. But the Indian community considers Western education irrelevant to their needs, so children find ways of controlling and communicating to their teachers by deliberately remaining silent as long as possible, pretending never to know the answer to a teacher's questions, doing written work extremely slowly and being uncooperative. This situation is different from the classroom atmosphere in most African schools, where enthusiasm for education is high

and the students are usually co-operative with teachers because they are highly motivated to pass examinations. The study is useful because it illustrates the fact that in schools the world over, the teacher's authority rests partly on the goodwill of the students. In conclusion, they found that if a teacher enforces discipline unfairly, appear to be ignorant or stray away from the syllabus, students including those from African have the capabilities to resist the teacher's authority either overtly or covertly in the classroom in the ways that are safer to them without breaking any overt rules.

Bennet (1990) has also written about the forms of the students' resistance behaviour to institutional arrangements. He notes that students resist either covertly or overtly through the use of signs and symbols. Among the various forms of students' resistance behaviour that Bennett (1990) cites are deliberate stopping coming to school, sleeping in the classrooms when the lesson is in progress, ditching classes which students feel are distasteful, dropping out or giving up on school. Bennett (1990) further states that some students express boredom and alienation by beginning to stop studying and engage in mild forms of smartaleck behaviour and vandalism. However, he doesn't explain how sleeping in classes when the lessons are in progress can become purposeful as the aspect of sleeping occurs unconsciously.

On a rather different note, Bianci and Ferdiman (1990) have indicated that students express resistance behaviour through low performance, dropping out or developing scornful attitudes towards academic work. Aronowtz and Giroux (1986) further points out that students use humour to disrupt a class, use collective pressure to draw teachers

away from class lessons or purposely ignore the teachers directions while attempting to develop collective spaces that allow them to escape the ethos of individualism permeating. Teachers, on the other hand, perceive some forms of resistance behaviours such as facial gestures and body language as indicative of negative attitudes (Bianci and Ferdinan, 1990). Because of their perceived resistance or rebellious attitudes, students may have difficulty gaining the respect of significant authority figures whose support is critical to their success (Giroux, 1983).

2.2 Causes of Resistance Behaviour

The causes of resistance behaviours in the classroom arise from different environments. According to Giroux (1981) the school is anti-dialogical. It prevents dialogue between the teacher and learner. This situation induces resistance from the students who are compelled not to express their views. Dattas (1984) study of the classroom corroborates this view. Thus, the teacher's entry into the classroom is generally followed by a general silence and the pupils stand up as a sign of respect, the lessons involve hardly any discussion and that students become cautious in the presence of an authority lest they appear ingenuous and invite correction (Rudduck, 1979). Thus, the teacher is both an authority and in authority. In such arrangements, the teacher represents the established dominative social order and his or her interests are in maintaining that order. The dominant social order is based on the Durkhemian view of the child as an empty vessel; a blank sheet waiting to be filled by the gents of the society (Meighan, 1986).

Manase and Kisanga in Datta (1984) also noted authoritarianism as a generator of resistance behaviour in their study of Tanzanian schools. In their study, they point out that the very design of, and seating arrangements presupposes that the pupils are empty pots which can never learn from each other but from one authority.

Similarly, Wragg and Wood (1984) did a study on the authority of secondary school teachers in the classroom which may cause reactions from students. They identified several classroom rules and regulations that teachers use to assert their authority in the classrooms. These were: there must not be talking when the teacher is talking, there must be no disruptive noises, there must be no interference with the work of others, work must be completed in a specified time, and pupils must not challenge the authority of the teacher in whatever way in the classrooms among others.

Also Barnes's (1979) study on how teaching is used in the Second Language (12) secondary school lessons illustrates the authoritarianism of the teacher in the classroom. He illustrates clearly how teachers channeled pupils contribution along predetermined lines which resulted in pupils comments being rejected as unacceptable or incorrect not because these comments did not make sense but because they did not fit closely enough the teachers requirements. From the pupil's perspectives, the overriding message was that their contribution needed to make what the teacher wanted.

When learners are viewed as passive beings that need to be guided because they lack experience and knowledge, teachers impose orders, threats, reminders and punishments

including expulsion of students from school in order to get students to obey school rules and regulations. Teachers, thus, define the roles of students and the students' viewpoints are mostly neglected.

Contrary to the prevailing view that the teacher dominance of classroom interactions often results from teacher's desires for social control, Tabulana's (2004) did a study in Botswana in a geography lesson on teacher's dominance in the classroom setting. He concludes that the teacher's dominance is a negotiated product, resulting from teachers and students exercising power on one another. Viewed in this way, reality becomes a co-construction by a teacher and students.

Other scholars, on the other hand, acknowledge that some students refuse to be silenced and demand the right to hold complex opinions or maintain contradictory consciousness. For example, Rose (1988) in Bennett (1990) was puzzled to find that black students in her college persisted in their use of Black English, even in written composition, despite the fact that they knew the Standard English alternatives and realized that the practice would lower their grades. At first she thought it was a way to reinforce a black identity. The explanation the students gave, however, was that for their purposes, Standard English just did not sound right. Not using Black English was like not using inflection and punctuation, Standard English simply did not convey the meaning they wanted.

Other studies have found that methods of teaching may give rise to resistance

behaviours in the classroom. Blakemore and Cooksey (1981) did a research on the methods of teaching in Britain and the USA. They noted that students resisted open classroom and discovery methods because they (methods) do not prepare them well for standardized tests as the traditional methods do. In addition, it is impolite for children to go on asking questions of adults or to interrupt adults when they are speaking as being advocated by progressive teaching methods (Blakemore and Cooksey, 1981).

However, Clark (1986) points out that students are capable of resisting the continuous use of traditional teaching and learning. He contends that the accent in many classes is not so much on learning as it is on order. Thus, the content and procedures are not very exciting as textbook teaching is seldom relieved by more exciting activities or more interesting readings. In addition, he notes that lessons are most frequently lectures, recitation, questioning, work book largely limited to facts and information without chance for students to think, act or enjoy. In addition, Clark (1986) states that there is relatively little group work or use of audiovisual aids, demonstrations, discussions, and hands-on activities among others. Furthermore, Clark (1986) states that teachers in such classes are impersonal, as they do not spend time praising or correcting students work or instructing them in how to do their assignments.

Likewise, Kyriacou (1996:112) also observes that the classroom tends to be traditional as it is dominated by teacher talk and when pupils are allowed to speak, it tends to be in the context highly constrained by the teacher, such as in answer to a question. Comments and observations by pupils tend to be drawn back into the line the teacher

has envisaged for the dialogue. Even, in classes where participatory approaches are in use, the teachers are power-figures as their knowledge and expertise dominates (Rudduck, 1979).

The studies and reviews by Clark, (1986) and Kyriacou, (1996) conclude that in such situations, students are bound to deliberately resist by using signs and symbols that are safer to them. Based on the teaching and learning situations described, it is apparent that the continuous use of one particular method of teaching and learning may cause purposeful negative reactions from students.

Apple (1978) study, on the other hand, reveals that some resistance behaviours have their roots outside the classroom. Thus, the germ of delinquency nurtured elsewhere persists in the classroom. This view is shared by Kyriacou (1996). He argues that the family and other circumstances play a pivotal role in causing resistance in the classrooms. He contrasts those child-rearing practices and family circumstances which contribute to children's intellectual development and self-confidence as learners with those that undermine such development.

For instance, he states that those pupils who see educational attainment as an important requirement for their future lives are much more likely to strive to meet the demands of school life than their peers who have not adopted such values or aspirations from their home experiences. Furthermore, he states that pupils, who come from homes where the child's relationship with adults has been sound, and where respect for teachers has been

fostered, will often hold teachers in high esteem and unquestionably accept their authority. Unfortunately, the converse is true. Where pupil's homes have not fostered such respect for teachers and other adults, the teacher will meet resistance thereby deriving little such benefit.

However, Kyriacou (1996:124) notes that other aspects of social-cultural milieu also influence misbehaviours and also to some extent, by genetic factors which influence personality development.

Feldhusen (1979), on the other hand, argues that students' resistance behaviour in the classroom, which leads to vandalism and the general disruption of teaching and learning in the classrooms, is the result of the confluence of many factors which, are triggered by some immediate happenstance. These include the heavy dose of crime and violence modeled by television, school experiences that precipitate a failure-frustration-aggression sequence, school and societal conditions that make it easy and rewarding for the youth to engage in violence and crime as an effective mechanism for adaptation or coping. According to Feldhusen (1979) much of the students' indiscipline in class may be related to a simple need to work off energy and to the problems inherent in adjusting to adolescents' new roles in society aggravated by poor curricula and methods of teaching.

Robertson (1996) argues that when considering the causes of misbehaviour, it is useful to identify what the motive for the pupil might be. He has identified four common

motives. These are attention seeking, causing excitement, malicious teasing and avoiding work. According to him all pupil misbehaviour serves underlying psychological needs and this need to be understood for effective management of learning environment.

In Malawi, the assertion of human rights in the learning environment and the absence of effective system of guidance and counseling have been blamed for the rapid rise of cases of indiscipline in the country's schools since the transition to the multiparty system of governance in 1994.

Maluwa-Banda (1995) who adopted the psychological approach notes that there has been an increase in the cases of student indiscipline in schools which have been characterized by riots, boycotts, rampant teasing and bullying, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies among others. In his research study that aimed at providing a description of how guidance and counseling are utilized in the Malawian secondary schools, he attributes indiscipline to little effective guidance and counseling services in schools.

Similarly, the then the Malawi Minister of Education, Kainja (1994) in her key note address to participants drawn from countries in the Eastern, Central and Southern Africa at a one day conference on the establishment of a Regional Training Centre for Guidance and Counseling in Malawi held on 26th January, 1994 expressed concern and great disappointment at the decline of moral values by the youths in Eastern, Central

and Southern African countries. Concerning factors leading to indiscipline in schools, Kainja (1994) points out that the problems which the youth face in countries include: problems like loss of moral values which lead to teenage pregnancies, breakdown of families, family squabbles, lack of parental and spiritual guidance and poverty among others. She further states that those factors, among others, adversely affect the pupil's behaviour in schools as reflected in the evidence of socio-psychological maladjustments. She then concludes that such problems are there due to little guidance and counseling services in schools.

Correspondingly, the Ministers of Education at that conference identified the following problems drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, problems who are ill guided on subject choices among others. In their final analysis, they found that the declining standards of moral values are attributable to lack of guidance and counseling services.

However, a study by Kuthemba- Mwale et al (1996) which was conducted after the advent of multiparty democracy notes that during the democratic dispensation, schools experienced the unprecedented waves of indiscipline that resulted into the disruption of teaching and learning process. These waves of indiscipline were generally characterized by students' drunkenness, defiance of authority, vandalism, insolence, use of abusive language, violence, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, assault and truancy just to name a few. According to Kuthemba-Mwale et al (1996), the incidences of indiscipline were attributed to a gross misunderstanding, misconception and misinterpretation of the

newly gained political pluralism, specifically the terms human rights, freedom and democracy. Mpinganjira (1998), Musopole (2000) and Machado (2006) also expressed similar sentiments.

2.3 Interpretation of Students' Resistance Behaviour

According to Field and Olfason (1999), most teachers interpret resistance behaviour in terms of individual students' personal attitudes and traits such as immaturity, irresponsibility, childishness, and lack of motivation, negative attitude and lack of seriousness with schoolwork. Field and Olfason (1999) further state that teachers name resistance as disruptive, attention seeking, uncooperative, impulsive or dependent.

However, a study by Marsh et al (1978) which involved interviewing pupils about when and why they resist or misbehave in school revealed how what appeared to teachers to be example of quite senseless misbehaviour were, when seen from the pupils perspective, meaningful and understandable reactions to their circumstances and to the teacher's behaviour towards them. The study highlights four types of teacher behaviour which pupils provoked them into resistance. These were teachers who were boring, teachers who could not teach, teachers whose discipline was weak and teachers who made unfair comparisons. The students in the study further reported that the said types of teacher behaviour insulted them in some way, and that their resistance was in large measure an attempt to maintain their sense of self dignity in the circumstances that confronted them. However, the studies have not explained whether the students were trying to communicate or not.

2.4 Management of Resistance Behaviour

For effective teaching and learning to take place in any classroom situation, students' resistance behaviour must be understood and managed by the teachers in the classrooms. This can be done by identifying the potential sources of resistance among others.

Goodman (2001) did a study on how students' resistance behaviour can be managed in the classrooms. He notes that resistance behaviour arises from a variety of sources, most of which are social and psychological. In order to combat resistance behaviour in the classroom, therefore, teachers must examine its points of origin. This view is shared by Brookfield (2006) who argues that once the reasons for resistance are understood, teachers can better employ strategies to help the resistance behaviour in the classroom.

Similarly, Keeney et al (retrieved on 6th July 2008 from [http:// academics.Georgiasouthern.edu/ijso/v2nl/articles/Keeney-Kencult-Gunese-Simpson/index.htm](http://academics.Georgiasouthern.edu/ijso/v2nl/articles/Keeney-Kencult-Gunese-Simpson/index.htm)) in the analysis of a web-based program that uses writing as a learning and assessment tool found that students' perceptions suggested that successful implementation of new tools require attention to potential sources of student resistance at the outset as well as active listening and response to student concern.

Contrary to the general views from different scholars that students' resistance behaviours can be managed by understanding the potential sources of the problems

(Goodman, 2001, Brookfield, 2006), Clark (1986) points out that indiscipline problems in the classrooms are not really anyone's faults, but rather the result of human boys and girls being together in schools and classes and also by teachers who are not perfect in training and insight in teaching. He then suggests that if the behaviour is not dangerous, it may be wise to simply ignore, asking students to be quiet if they are resisting through making noise or simply finding other work for trouble makers so as to get them out of the public view.

Still, other teachers manage students' resistance in the classroom through the exclusion of the students who are displaying such behaviours. For example, Kyriacou (1996) cites two patterns of misbehaviors which result into exclusion. These are the patterns relating to serious incidents which result in themselves immediate exclusion while the other relating to precipitating incidences not being serious on their own but a gradual built up of such behaviour. Mitchel (1996) has reported that the most frequent precipitating incidents that lead to exclusion include verbal abuse, disruption of teaching and learning processes in the classrooms.

2.5 Summary and Conclusion of the Reviewed Studies

Most of the studies that have been reviewed in this thesis agree that resistance behaviour takes many forms and has varied causes and that different authors have emphasized different causes thereby creating the dynamism of the teaching and learning environment. However, most of these reviewed studies if not all do not say anything about resistance behaviour as form of communication in the classrooms. The

studies in Malawi have tended to view indiscipline as originating from the issues of democracy and human rights and lack of effective guidance and counseling services. This study attempts to highlight that student resistance behaviour is a form of students' communication strategy in the context of institutionalized dominance built within the classroom role structure. Therefore, this study will add to the body of knowledge on the causes of poor teaching and learning in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Research Design

The study was ethnographic and employed qualitative research methods designed to achieve an understanding of classroom interactions between the teachers and the students. The major tool for the exercise was the observation schedule. Clarifications on observed behaviours were obtained through interviews, focus group discussions with the participants, and also school records. In the analysis, the data that appeared regularly was put into themes and explanations followed thereafter. Thus, the steps and procedures that I followed were integrated and interdependent.

3.2 Piloting of Instruments

A pilot study was conducted on 23rd and 24th of May 2007 at Maghemo secondary school in Karonga town. Maghemo secondary school is a conventional secondary school just like those schools that were selected for the study. During the pilot study, I had an observation schedule in order to find out what modes of students' resistance behaviour appear in the classroom. I observed one classroom, held focus group discussions with ten students and had in-depth interviews with five teachers. I also checked school documentation such as punishment books and period registers.

The pilot testing was intended firstly, to test if the required information would be

captured and to have an overview of what would be expected during the research study. Secondly, to act as an insurance against bias and flaws in the research design. Thirdly, to gain experience in using the instruments and the research procedures before embarking on the main research study. The feedback that I got from the participants was useful in that I was able to refine my data collection plans in respect to both content of the data and the procedures that I followed. For instance, I discovered ambiguities in meaning of the term ‘resistance’. Hence, I included the other terms such as ‘misbehaviour’ and ‘indiscipline.’ Furthermore, the participants requested me to rearrange question on one of the guides. I, therefore, rearranged question one to become a preliminary one. This provided an entry point to the present question one (Refer Appendix 1, 2 and 4).

The languages for communication during the pilot run were English and Chitumbuka. As a quality assurance mechanism, I translated and transcribed all the interviews that were conducted in Chitumbuka into English.

3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

After drafting the research instruments such as interview guides for FGDs and in-depth interviews, the instruments were scrutinized for reliability and validity by supervisors and other experienced researchers as well as classmates for scrutiny and comments. Most of the instruments responded positively during the pilot study. Those that did not respond positively were refined so that they should capture the requisite information more effectively.

3.4 Study Sites

Malawi has six educational divisions, thus, one in the North, two in the Centre and three in the South. The Education Division Manager (EDM) is responsible for managing education in each of the education divisions. Each of the divisions has district education offices, which are headed by the District Education Manager (DEM). The head teacher heads each secondary school. The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Karonga district of the Northern Education Division of Malawi. The Northern Education Division is responsible for the management of education in the northern region. The division, which comprises the following District Education Offices: Mzimba (North and South), Mzuzu City, Karonga, Rumphi, Chitipa, Likoma and Nkhata-Bay have 21 government conventional secondary schools. Out of these, 14 are boarding and the rest are day secondary schools. The division has 4 girls secondary schools, 3 boys secondary schools and the rest are co-education schools.

Karonga District Education Division was selected as a study site. Karonga District Education Division has four conventional secondary schools. Out of these, two are grant aided while two are government secondary schools. The rest are either community day or private secondary schools.

I selected this study site because I work in the same division. In addition, since it was a self sponsored research, it was easy for me to carry out the research as I was operating from my house except for one school which is approximately seventy kilometers away from where I was staying. My carrying out research in a familiar environment should

not, however, prejudice the findings as all standards for carrying a credible research project were met.

3.5 Project Clearance

To facilitate entry into the research sites, I got an introductory letter from the Faculty of Education at Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi. (See appendix 7). The letter was then presented to the Ministry of Education Headquarters where permission in writing was sought in order to visit the schools. (See appendix 8 for permission letter from the Ministry of Education Headquarters). This was done through the EDM (N). The letter from Ministry of Education Headquarters was presented to the head teachers of the sampled schools before the actual research study was conducted. When presenting the letters to the responsible officers, I briefed them about my topic such that they were made aware of what I was doing in the schools.

3.6 Selection of Participants

The schools for the research study were Chaminade, Karonga Girls and Chilumba secondary schools. These schools were grouped as single sex and coeducational. A sample selection comprising 39 students and 15 teachers was used for focus group discussions and in depth interviews. A total of 437 teachers and students were the subject of classroom observations.

Table 1 provides details of the teachers and students that were involved.

Table 1: Total number of teachers and students for the study

School	Pupils			Teachers	
	Boys	Girls	Total	Male teachers	Female teachers
Karonga girls		352	352	10	4
Chaminade	380		380	14	6
Chilumba	315	87	402	12	5
Total	695	439	1134	36	15

Source: School documentation such as registers and staff returns

The selected participants were purposefully sampled and were studied in their own schools or classes as their natural settings. According to Wiersma (1991:265), purposeful sampling is selection based on the characteristics of the units relevant to the research problem. The selection of the units was based on the characteristics of the sample relative to the phenomenon under study and also on a sample from which “one can learn the most to gain understanding and insight” (Merriam, 1988:48). For example, Karonga Girls and Chaminade Boys secondary schools were chosen in order to get some of the needed information that was not going to be possible if they were mixed in either the classrooms or during focus group discussions. Therefore, the information that was obtained through classroom observations and focus group discussions is fairly reliable and valid. In addition, the choices of the schools were on the premises that the schools have all the school documentation that was needed for the study; for example, discipline books and punishment registers were available. Chilumba secondary school was chosen because I needed information that could not be

obtained in single sex schools.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection for the study was carried for a period of one and half months, beginning from 25th May and ending on 5th July 2007. A combination of methods such as classroom observations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and documentary sources was used to collect the required data. The aim of cross-validating the methods or techniques were to assess the efficiency of the data that I had collected according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures (Wiersma, 1991:265). Thus, the information that I got from all the data sources were compared and contrasted to see if there were any marked links before drawing conclusions. For instance, during my classroom observation at one study site, I observed that some students were engaged in activities other than the ones that had been assigned by the class teacher. In order to validate my observations, I conducted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with the participants. Thus, the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were treated as complementary to classroom observations.

3.7.1 Observations

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:79) observations entail the systematic noting and recording of events; behaviours and artifacts in the social setting chosen for the study and classroom observational studies are one example. Classroom observation was the first qualitative method that I used to have an overall impression of the setting and have some questions to be followed up in interviews. During the observation

schedules, I usually sat quietly at a place, which was convenient to observe the classroom interactions between the teachers and the students in each observed classroom. As I sat quietly at a convenient place in the classroom, I was also looking for any instance of refusal or deliberate failure to behave in an expected situation by the students and also how teachers were managing resistance behaviour in the classroom.

Since students resistance behaviour becomes such only within the context in which it is observed, I observed four classes and the teachers who were teaching different subjects at the time of the observation schedule at each study site, thereby making a total of twelve classes and five teachers. The subjects that were observed were English, mathematics, history, agriculture, biology, life skills, bible knowledge, geography, social studies and others.

Classes were observed during the entire forty-minute (40) or eighty- minute (80) period of teaching and learning. Before classroom observations commenced, I explained to the teachers concerned that what was involved was merely observation, not supervision or inspection. The intention was to make the teachers feel at ease with my presence. Some of the teachers also explained the same to their students.

In order to keep a record of classroom observations, I used anecdotal records consisting of a page on which I noted significant incidents about students' resistance behaviour in each observed class at a time. In the anecdotal record, I recorded what happened when, where and under what circumstances. The anecdotal records helped me to evaluate the observed behaviours instead of relying on memory. Thus, by collecting

and recording the information in the anecdotal records, I guarded myself against the tendency of recalling only recent data and critical incidents that might have made my analysis unfair and biased. Appendix 5 is a sample of the anecdotal page.

Furthermore, the observations also assisted me to make follow up questions during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews as the information that I obtained through the classroom observations was justified with that of the focus group discussions, the in-depth interviews and the documentary sources.

Immediately following the classroom observations, the students' resistance behaviours that I recorded in anecdotal records were contextualized, synthesized and summarized, including any interpretations that were implied. The field notes were later turned into data, which was in raw form. The raw data was further turned into categories, which I made into themes.

That was possible because after the field notes were taken in each observed class, I had sometime between the observations to reflect on and reorganize my field notes.

3.7.2 Interviews

The second data collection method that I used to gather information from the participants was through conducting interviews with the students and the teachers. This method enabled me to talk at length with the participants that I studied. As such, I was able to discover more about the students' resistance behaviour that other methods could not illuminate. According to Lundy and Warne (1988:29), in-depth interviews can

illuminate areas about which little is known and those that cannot be effectively explored through other methods. The aims of the interviews were mainly used to complement or to seek clarifications on what had transpired during class lesson observations. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000:509) state that interviewing is an important way for researchers to check the accuracy of---to verify or refute---the impressions he or she has gained through observation. Therefore, interviews involved the teachers and the students who were observed.

Before I conducted the interviews, I prepared interview guides for the interviewees, which comprised questions that targeted the teachers and the students. Such questions were open-ended which “allowed for open narrative responses” (Weiss, 1998:154). A target of thirty participants in total was interviewed. The sampling of students at a mixed secondary school and of teachers from all study sites was based on gender. Thus, five students and five teachers from each school were interviewed in their respective schools and in the places, which were conducive to both the interviewer and the interviewee.

The sample of five students and five teachers was based on the fact that if too many participants were involved in the interviews, a lot of time would have been consumed for interviews at the expense of other methods.

Before the interviews, I also introduced myself to each individual participant and the participant also did likewise. The main aim of the introductions was to build up a

rapport with the participants since the interview is a social encounter.

I interviewed the students who were observed in the classroom but not involved in focus group discussions. The reason behind incorporating those students and teachers was to make sure that as much information on the subject as possible was collected and also to seek justification on what had transpired during classroom observations. Each of the participants had to be interviewed and tape-recorded depending upon the interest of the participants. The tape recording was useful in the sense that I was able to get the correct words. However, the use of the tape recorder was sometimes obtrusive to some of the participants who actually felt nervous and others did not like it at all. In such circumstances, I recorded the findings in a notebook. During the in-depth interviews, the general themes were explored to find out how the participants interpret and deal with students' resistance behaviour in the classroom.

As a quality assurance mechanism, I listened carefully to participants' responses. When I needed further probing to dig out facts, follow up statements and in general to break through a frequently expressed initial façade of feeding me as a researcher with what was perceived to be a socially or professionally preferred responses regardless of the participants true feelings, I used such probes 'anything else', 'anything to add' and so on. In addition, I also made sure not to show surprise, disapproval or shock when the participants were giving out answers that I did not expect. After the interviews, I asked the interviewee to ask any question that was related to the topic and then finally, I thanked each of the participants.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The other method of collecting data that I employed for this study to complement classroom observations was focus group discussions. Before the focus group interviews were conducted, a focus group guide was prepared. The interview guide, which allowed the participants flexibility to express their ideas, was based on the objectives of the study, classroom observations that were done during the pilot study. Still others were based on the classroom observations that were done before interviews.

Furthermore, prior to the commencement of focus group discussions, I stressed at the beginning of each focus group discussions that it was important for each participant to give an honest individual response to each question. The main advantage of that was that the 'true' views of some of the students in each group were not suppressed by views of the vocal ones.

I conducted the focus group discussions with eight students who were observed during the observation time. The aim of interviewing such students was to get clarifications on the behaviours that were displayed in the classroom. Additionally, I also based on the notion that truth resides in numbers. Thus, two students represented each form at a school. In case of a mixed secondary school, a male and a female student represented each form. According to Salan and Dilliman (1994:29), focus group discussions typically involve eight to ten people.

The justification for eight students per group were that if less students per group were

allowed, they might have provided insufficient number of stimulating dialogue and more than eight students might not have allowed all the participants to express their viewpoints. The focus group discussions were conducted up to a point when I was satisfied that most students had made their contributions to the topic.

The focus groups did not include those students who participated in the in-depth interviews. The idea was to get the views from a cross-section of the students. One of the students among the group was purposively selected to lead the focus group discussions such that each of the students in the group was given the chance to participate actively in discussions. This made the vocal students not to dominate the discussions. I also designated another student who was not among those who were focused for group discussions to take down the notes of the proceedings. The job of the recorder was to keep a record of the important points and decisions made during the discussions. The selection of the student was based on the recommendations from the head teachers. Both students who took part in the writing down of notes and leading the focus group discussions were inducted before they resumed their roles. The induction included the students' commitment to confidentiality. My role as a researcher was that of a consultant for whatever contingency that might have arisen and the students did the bulk of the discussions on their own. According to Mwiria and Wamahiu (1995), a good qualitative interview requires the interviewee to do the majority of talking.

Routinely, I asked follow up questions in order to get further clarifications and elaborations. But before I left, I made sure that the information that was gathered was

read out to the students who were in the group so as to make sure that all the necessary information was captured. The discussions were recorded down and preserved in notebooks. Notebooks ensured that if after the interviews some points could not be remembered corrections could be made later on. In addition, I used a notebook to record all the follow up questions in order to get further clarifications and elaborations.

The focus group discussions were appropriate for this study in that the views of eight students from each study site were heard in one place at each study site in the same amount of time. This would have taken a lot of time to orally interview one or two students. Secondly, the focus group discussions assisted me to capture properties of group dynamics, which through interaction of participants provided me with valuable, sometimes unexpected information and understanding on the various issues pertaining to the topic. This was possible because the views of each student or some students were corrected by the views of the others so that there was argument, defense, justification, attack and learning over the course of the session. For example, the consensus views during the study cited deliberate prolonged yawning in the classroom while the lesson is in progress as a form of students' resistance behaviour while the minority views while agreeing with their friends, argued that some times students yawn without intentions.

Finally, I found that students were freer to express their ideas in the focus group discussions than in the in-depth interviews. This observation was also made by Mac Jessie - Mbewe (2004). According to him focus groups are better because schools in

Malawi are examination oriented and sometimes when one conducts one to one interviews the participants think that it is an examination so they get tensed up.

The language of the discussions was mixed, thus, English and Chitumbuka. The use of the local language, which was dominant in the study, was based on the fact that not all the students have a good mastery of the English Language and also on the premises that the aim of the study was not on English proficiency but to get the required information from the participants.

The other reason was that I am conversant with both languages. Therefore, it was easy for me to understand and translate what was said in Chitumbuka into English in a trustworthy manner. However, in certain circumstances, I would think that by translating the Chitumbuka statements or words into English, I was making approximations of the same. This is so because there are certain Chitumbuka statements or words, which do not have English equivalents because these two languages are remote from each other as they have different typologies. Finally, I thanked the participants for their valuable information that they provided me during the interviews.

For detailed number of the participants interviewed and observed. See overleaf:

Table 2: Total number of participants observed and interviewed

School	Interviewed(in-depth, FGDs)	Observations (classes)
Karonga girls	18	180 (four classes)
Chaminade	18	115 (four classes)
Chilumba	18	142 (four classes)
Total	54	437 (twelve classes)

3.7.4 Review of Documentary Sources.

Gathering and reviewing documents complemented the classroom observations that I had prior to the documentary reviewing. The documents that I systematically reviewed in all the three study sites were period attendance register, staff returns, punishment books and discipline books. The main advantages of using the records were that they were written contemporaneously with the events that were recorded. Thus, they provided me with rich information that was not subjected to memory distortion or decay. Marshall and Rossman (1995), state that reviewing documents is an unobtrusive method, one rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting. The other advantages of the documents were that people who compiled some of them did a thorough job, as they knew that they were the official documents of the school.

Secondly, the wall charts that were displayed in the classroom as the teaching and learning materials were observed to find out how the students display their resistance behaviour as a form of communication in the classroom. The wall charts where students scribbled their resistance behaviour assisted me as they provided me with the entry

points to some forms of students' resistance behaviours during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews that I conducted later after classroom observations.

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

I developed a framework of analysis, which were based on objectives of the study and the issues identified in the initial problem analysis and during the pilot study. The framework was revised when additional themes and issues arose from the data. The data that I collected, organized and verified by triangulation was in two sets of overall analytical strategies. Firstly, the categorical, which emphasized on the development of analytical strategies such as identifying similarities and differences among the data, coding them and sorting them into appropriate categories. Secondly, the holistic analysis, which focused more on descriptions, backed by quotations from the interviews that I conducted with the participants.

The intent, therefore, was to produce a report that accurately represented the categorical and holistic analyses which was blended into a meaningful account of events. I analyzed the data for my study in two interrelated phases. Firstly, as the data was collected, I transcribed and analyzed it looking for the significant instances of the various forms of the students' resistance behaviours, the causes of students' resistance behaviours, and how teachers interpret and deal with the students' resistance behaviours in the classroom.

Secondly, from those reports, I constructed analytic memos consisting of questions,

topics and themes. The data that appeared regularly was developed into themes or categories under which they were analyzed. According to Merriam (1988:133), developing categories, typologies or themes involves looking for recurring regularities in the data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that putting qualitative data into categories or themes brings order and meaning to mass of collected data. The data were backed by the thick descriptions from quotes that were obtained from classroom observations, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This facilitated the interpretation. Thus, in this study, qualitative data that I gathered was developed into themes and categories with different concepts and then explanations were attached to each category.

The data processing and analysis in this study was a continuous process. It started soon after data collection began. This was important as it assisted me to check on the unanticipated results. In fact, data collection and data analysis run together, less data was collected and more analysis was produced as the research was progressing. For example, when I had collected the data in a day, I had to spend the following day to transcribe and analyze it before I could gather more data. The other reason why I collected, transcribed and analyzed the data concurrently was to describe the students' resistance in its context and, on that basis, interpreting the data.

However, after I had finished translating the interviews and discussion transcripts and had reorganized all my data, I read them over and over again to familiarize myself with the data. In the process of doing this, new insights, categories and themes were

emerging which assisted me to revise my previous ideas. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003:281) the process of rereading enables one to be familiar in intimate ways with what one has learnt.

At the end of re-reading, I had a number of themes, categories and insights that I wrote down as they came. Then I started looking at them again to see if some of the themes could be condensed and expressed as one main category that could be developed using the available data.

3.9 Ethical Issues

Since the study involved human participants, research ethics had to be observed to ensure that the rights of the participants were respected in order to maintain positive ethos in the conduct of research. These were informed consent, informing the participant about the purpose of the research and protecting participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

Before the actual commencement of the interviews or discussions, I always sought verbal consent from the participants. They were given enough leeway to decide whether or not to participate. For example, one participant refused to be interviewed and another also refused to be observed. They wanted to be paid for participating. The participants who accepted to be interviewed were informed about their role in the research. In addition, the participants were told to be free to terminate the interview at any point during the interviews.

All the participants and the responsible officers who granted me permission to conduct the research study were informed about the topic and the purpose of my research study. In addition, the participants were also informed about the extent of the commitment that I required from them. This assisted me quite a lot, as the participants did not doubt about my presence there. Hence, they gave me most of the required information that I had expected.

I made sure that all the participants of the study remained anonymous. The participants were assured that the information that I collected during the research study would be held in strict confidence and would solely be used for the study. The identities of the participants were highly masked. For example, names from interviews were replaced with code numbers and the field notes from observational study and anecdotal records included pseudonyms rather than the participant's real names. The promise of anonymity made the participants feel free to make their views and sentiments known. I also made sure that the participants did not know what the other participants had said or written except for focus group discussions for that particular group.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

It is likely that my presence in the classroom altered the teaching and learning environment. Students' behaviour was likely to have been modified to suit their perception of expected behaviour. One teacher at one study site told the students that I was recording everything that was taking place in the classroom and as such they should behave well. Some students kept on peeping at me during the entire lesson.

It was also difficult to isolate some of the events that were occurring in the classroom. Meighan (1986) supports this view when he illustrates the full force of this difficulty by pointing out the problems of everyday life in the classroom for the observer. However, this problem was minimized as I had anecdotal records where I recorded what was observed. In addition, the thick descriptions of each research site including quotations from the participants and their gestures and actions were described and recorded. This later assisted me when analyzing the results of the study.

Finally, some of the documents such as punishment books that I found in the schools were characterized by a dearth of detail. That was so possibly because such documents were written for other purposes other than directly for my topic. Therefore, sometimes it was difficult to isolate that some of the indiscipline problems really emanated from the classroom situations, as there are a host of other factors. However, some documents such as the discipline files and class attendance registers were detailed.

These limitations notwithstanding, I am convinced that the study provides useful insights into teacher-student interactions in an environment characterized by unequal power relations.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented and discussed so as to present the true picture of the study. The discussion of the findings directly addresses the objectives that this study set out to achieve. This chapter, therefore, performs four tasks. Firstly, the study presents the forms of students' resistance behaviour. Secondly, the study presents the causes of resistance behaviour. Furthermore, the study presents how teachers interpret the students' resistance behaviour. Finally, the study presents how teachers deal with the students' resistance behaviour. However, the first and the second objectives have been discussed and dealt with simultaneously in this thesis.

The presentation of the findings and discussion are grouped together as much as possible according to the light that they shed on the topic. Thus, I grouped together the themes that appeared regularly before they were analyzed.

4.1 Forms and Causes of Students' Resistance Behaviours in the Classroom

Resistance behaviour, which is any instance of refusal or deliberate or intentional failure to behave in any expected manner in a classroom situation, took a number of forms. The following were observed and justified through FDGs, in-depth interviews or documentary sources.

4.1.1 Non-Response to Questions

While silence during the delivery of a lesson is expected, remaining silent when asked to respond to a question could be a message to the teacher, especially where the lesson is apparently still fresh in the mind. In most of the lessons (English, history and social studies) that I observed, I noticed that some students deliberately refused to respond to some questions which were posed to them by the class teacher on lessons delivered previously or just delivered and whose answers they should have known. The silence was explained in FGDs in these terms:

When we see that our teachers are very harsh, keep on threatening us with the poor results of the assignments/ tests or takes time rebuking the students when they give wrong answers, we sometimes don't answer the questions of such teachers, even those that could be attempted. When such teachers try to force the students to give responses, they usually get such responses such as, 'I don't have an idea, Sir'. The point is that we are implicitly not approving what they are doing.

On the other hand, the minority views of some of the participants stated that students failed to respond to the teachers probing questions not because they did not know the correct answers, but it was sometimes because they had linguistic problems in expressing responses. Sometimes it was out of psychological reservations in fear of making linguistic errors or fearing to be laughed at. They also stated that sometimes they remained quiet because they did not know the answer. For instance, some students during the focus group discussions gave this response:

Sometimes it is difficult to answer some of the questions in English even if you

know the answer, if you try and make the mistake, some students start laughing at you by saying that you have spoken the 'broken English'.

What emerged from the discussion was that silence when asked to respond to a question could be used to signal dissatisfaction with certain aspects of a teacher's teaching approach or attitude to the learners. But it could also be a result of a genuine inability to articulate an answer.

4.1.2 Noise making in the Classroom

When students do not remain silent during the delivery of a lesson and instead choose to engage in noisemaking, meaningful communication is difficult, if not impossible. During a geography lesson, I observed that some students were deliberately talking to each other when a teacher whose voice was not audible enough to be heard clearly was teaching. In other lessons, I also observed that students were shouting at each other as the teacher was delivering when the lessons were of double periods, close to lunch breaks and in lessons where students were more of teacher talk than student talk. According to the students, noisemaking was meant to signal their dissatisfaction with their lack of participation; length of the class period; inappropriateness of the time for the specific subject; and poor delivery of the lesson. In general it was to draw attention to discontent.

4.1.3 Failure or Late Submission of Assignments

During the classroom observations, I noticed that some teachers in some of the study

sites were complaining that some students did not hand in previous assignments on time while others did not submit at all. During class discussions, it was revealed that students deliberately do not hand in their assignments when they think they have not done well. This was done to avoid embarrassing comments from the teacher. This was common in mathematics, physical science and geography. For instance, the following were some of the consensus comments that I got through in-depth interviews:

Some teachers tend to give students assignments when they know very well that students did not understand them when they were teaching.

A minority of the students, however, attributed failure to hand in assignments to the student's own laziness.

4.1.4 Diverted Attention

It was observed in a number of study sites that during mathematics and physical science lessons, some students diverted their attention to other subjects such as reading history, geography, agriculture and others. Some were even passing notes, whose contents I did not see, to others in the classroom. When I cross-validated my observations, the participants indicated that students display such behaviour when they find that the teachers' approach to teaching was boring. Furthermore, they also stated that students displayed the behaviour when they (students) had already lost interest in the subject and thought that they could do something worthwhile. The following were the general views that were highlighted by the participants during the FGDs:

Some subjects are tough and sometimes you do not understand when the teacher is

teaching. So the best way is to attend the class in order not to disappoint the teacher but at the same time to do other things (FGDs)

Mathematics and physical science subjects are compulsory and students are compelled to learn them. But it seemed that many students were not interested in it, hence, diverted attentions.

4.1.5 Prolonged Yawning

During a number of classroom observations, it was noted that students would begin to yawn continuously. This observation was made when lessons were of double periods, close to lunch breaks and mostly information subjects such as history, agriculture, geography, social studies just to mention a few. I also noted that deliberate simultaneous prolonged in the classroom generally occurred when the lesson went on far too long, or was boring. According to the consensus views from the students in the FGDs:

Simultaneous prolonged yawning in the classroom shows that the lesson is boring so it's a sign of protest.

In effect, the students were signaling to the teacher that something was amiss during the lesson, which needed to be attended to; but they could not tell their teachers openly for fear of sanctions.

4.1.6 Missing Classes

Absence from classes was also noted during the study. There would be gaps in some of the students' seats during some lessons. The period registers would indicate that some students deliberately missed the classes that they should have been attending without valid reasons.

The focus group discussions revealed that students tended to miss classes that were:

- non-examinable, such as life skills
- perceived to be difficult such as mathematics and physical science
- taught close to lunch hour when students would be hungry
- started soon after lunch hour when they are likely to be full and needing a siesta
- taught by the particular teacher is perceived to be harsh.

From the discussions, it was apparent that missing classes was meant to send a message about the subject in question, reflecting what the students felt about its relevance, complexity and timing.

4.1.7 Grunts and Groans

Deliberate grunting and groaning sounds simulating pain and displeasure were noted during some lessons. This occurred where

- assignments were handed out to be done outside noted normal time table
- classes appeared to be dull and monotonous

According to the students:

We grunt and groan when we see that some teachers are fond of giving us

assignments that are done outside the school timetable because we have other things to do which are also integral components of school life.

Using what is cited above, it appeared that most students made deliberate grunts and groans in the classrooms to communicate symbolically to their teachers about their distaste for assignments which were written outside the normal school time table and also where classes appeared to be dull and monotonous, poor preparation by teachers and inconsistency in the application of the rules and procedures.

4.1.8 Graffiti

Through the classroom observations, I noticed that some students communicate about certain issues by scribbling negative comments on walls and classroom charts. For example, in some of the classrooms that I visited and observed, I read such writings on the walls and charts as:

Some teachers are biased here, some male teachers are fond of proposing our girls here; some teachers are very harsh here.

Discussions with the students revealed that they used the graffiti to communicate their feelings anonymously for fear of repercussions as no real names were used. This meant that the school authorities might not be able to pin down any one individual as the culprit.

4.1.9 Summary of the Findings and Discussions

The findings and analysis of the themes on the various forms of the students' resistance behaviour and the circumstances under which they occurred indicated that noisemaking was the most common form of resistance behaviour. It should also be noted that the autocratic environment that prevailed in most of the classrooms made most of the students communicate about certain issues that were happening in their classrooms by symbolically displaying the various forms of resistance behaviours.

4.2 Teachers' Interpretation of Students' Resistance behaviour

Since teachers and students occupy different positions in the power and dominance structure of the classroom, their interpretation of apparently disruptive behaviour is likely to reflect their different positions. Teachers interpreted students' display of what appeared to be disruptive or destructive behaviour in a number of ways. These are discussed below:

4.2.1 Lack of Interest

To teachers, disruptive behaviour was a clear indication of lack of interest in their learning. It indicated they would rather be doing something more interesting, or in their perception more profitable such as running businesses.

4.2.2 Childishness

Teachers believed that many students engaged in disruptive behaviour because they were too young to appreciate the importance of taking their learning seriously. The

emergence of private primary schools which admit pupils, who are below the official age of six years, means that their products enter secondary school when they are still very young. In teacher's view those that engaged in disruptive behaviour tended to reflect their immaturity.

4.2.3 A challenge to Authority

Behaviour that is unacceptable in the classroom is generally treated as a challenge to the authority of the teacher and his/her institutionalized dominant position. Such challenges to authority warrant punishment. The majority of teachers who were interviewed for the study treated any disruptive behaviour in the classroom as a challenge to their authority.

The teachers' views revealed that behaviour that disrupts the learning process was viewed negatively. In general the teachers did not appreciate the fact that their students might be trying to communicate something where they occupy a subordinate position.

4.3 Dealing with the Students' Resistance Behaviour

Teachers responded to students' disruptive behaviour in a number of ways:

4.3.1 Punishment

Punishing students was the most commonly used method of dealing with students' resistance behaviour in the classroom in the sampled schools. This was because teachers tended to view all forms of resistance behaviour negatively. However, some

teachers occasionally used punishments to emphasize their authority over students. Teachers punished students in a variety of ways. Some of which are outlined below:

- **Detention**

In some of the classrooms that I visited during the study, I observed that some teachers were dealing with students' resistance behaviour such as noisemaking by detaining a whole class or a few students who were deliberately expressing their resistance behaviour to their teachers in the classrooms. It was further observed that detention was usually done at the end of the school day. Students were usually detained in the classroom. However, if only few students were spotted to be expressing resistance behaviour, some teachers detained them in the staff room while showering insults at them so as to make them stop the misbehaviour. Below were some of the general views of the participants during the FGDs and in-depth interviews to complement classroom observations.

Students are usually detained when we see that they are showing some forms of resistance behaviour such as making noise in the classroom.

- **Re-allocation of Students**

In six of the lessons that I observed, I noticed that some teachers were managing students' resistance behaviours such as intentional noisemaking, diverted attention among others to other seats other than the ones that they were occupying. Interviews with teachers revealed that teachers tended to re-allocate the students who were displaying resistance behaviour in order to break up seating arrangements that allowed

cliques and friends too much social interactions thereby minimizing misbehaviours in the classroom. Thus, the chronic offenders were given the front seat or at a place where the teacher could easily monitor.

However, the other participants stated that the above form of punishment should be used sparingly as it would give the resister the chance to show off as he or she is assured of the audience especially when he/she is given the front seat. At the same time, it assumed that the teacher would work entirely from his/her desk at the front of the classroom. The participants also stated that the re-allocated student felt embarrassed and he or she developed scornful attitudes towards classroom work thereby affecting the students learning process.

- **Verbal Threats**

This study further found out that teachers usually use verbal threats in order to reduce students' resistance behaviour in the classrooms. For instance, such verbal threats as *'be careful I can punish you!'* *If you keep on making noise, I will send you out of my classrooms don't want any nonsense in my classroom* were very common in most of the observed classrooms. Such threats were observed when some teachers noticed that some students were deliberately making noise.

The students on the other hand responded by temporarily being quiet.

Though, this form of punishment is a good one because it can be administered quickly, some of the participants were of the view that this form of punishment was unpleasant

to the offender. In addition, some participants stated that the verbal threats that teachers used could at times provoke confrontations with the students thereby creating more problems for the teacher. Furthermore, they stated that loud and frequent verbal intimidation tended to reinforce the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom thereby developing distaste for the teacher and subsequently his or her lesson.

- **Forcing Pupils to Standing Up**

In some classes teachers forced students to stand up for the entire duration of the class. This was noticed during classroom observations. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with the participants complemented classroom observations. For instance, I noticed that some teachers made some of the students who had diverted attentions, those who failed to submit assignments on time and noisemakers in the classrooms stand up. The participants especially the teachers indicated that the idea of making students stand up was to make the students be alert all the time. But more importantly, they wanted to make the offender feel embarrassed and ridiculed so that others should not commit similar offences. Though, this method of controlling the misbehaviour seemed to be effective somehow, the other students, other than the ones that were forced to stand up were also disturbed. That was so because other students kept on looking at him or her at the expense of listening to what the teacher was teaching

4.3.2 Stern Look

This study has also revealed that some of the teachers contained the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom by a stern look at the students who were behaving in a

disruptive manner. This was found out during classroom observations. For example, I observed in some of the classrooms that some teachers made a stern look at some of the students who were deliberately making noise and diverted attentions when the lessons were in progress. As they were looking at such students, the whole class remained quiet and got focused on to the students who were displaying such forms of resistance behaviours. After the students noticed that, they stopped what they were doing instantly. The teacher then proceeded with the lessons. Focus group discussions revealed that some teachers deal with the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom by a stern look at the resistor(s). They even continued to say that some teachers looked at the resisters sternly with a raised eyebrow. According to the general views of the participants, this proved to be useful as the flow of the lessons in the classrooms were not derailed much. For example, some teachers made the following consensus views during the in-depth interviews:

Sometimes it helps to look sternly at the student who is misbehaving in the classroom. When a student notices that the teacher is looking at him or her, he or she stops whatever he or she was doing.

4.2.3 Intimidating Advance

This study further found out that some teachers dealt with the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom by making intimidating advances towards students who were displaying forms of resistances. This was evidenced through the classroom observations in the study sites. For instance, I observed one teacher at one study site making intimidating advance towards a student who was reading a novel when the

other students were answering comprehension questions from the passage that he gave them. After the student realized that the teacher had noticed what he was doing, he started reading the passage and eventually answering questions. Such experiences were also noted in most classes that I observed, though, in different subjects and circumstances. Interviews revealed that teachers dealt with the students' resistance in the classroom by making intimidating advances towards students who were displaying some forms of resistance behaviour. The following were some of the predominant statements of the majority of the students and the teachers that I got from the participants during interviews:

I usually walk towards a student who is showing some forms of resistances and stand very close to him or her. (In-depth interviews with the teacher).

However, the other participant stated that as the teacher walked towards the student who was showing some forms of the students' resistance behaviour, the focus of the whole class was on that particular student thereby disturbing the other students and the student who was followed by the teacher felt embarrassed.

4.2.4 Calling on the Student to Provide the Next Response

It was observed that when students were not paying attention, a teacher would call upon him/her to answer the next question. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews also found out that some teachers dealt with the students' resistance behaviour in the classroom by calling on the students who were showing some forms of resistance behaviour to provide the next response. This made the students be alert during the

entire periods of my observation in the classrooms. Some felt embarrassed. Teachers justified this form of punishment as a good one as the progress of the lessons was not derailed much.

However, the participants stated that in as much as the method of dealing with the student resistance behaviour was effective, the student felt embarrassed as in most cases such students failed to provide the following responses correctly.

4.3.5 Pause and Interruptions

When students were making noise, diverted attentions some teachers were observed to pause. Such an action immediately brought silence. Teachers during the in-depth interviews justified this as the better way of managing students resistance especially noise making in the classroom as the progress of the lesson was not affected much. The following were the general views from a teacher.

When I see that some students are making noise in the classroom while I am teaching, I pause a little bit. (In-depth interviews).

4. 3.6 Ignoring the Problem

Through the classroom observations, I also observed that when some students were making noise; however, the teacher continued his teaching until such students stopped on their own accord. When I followed up the issue later on during the in-depth interviews that I had with the teachers, most of the teachers stated that indiscipline problems were inherent in any classroom because students from different backgrounds

with different tastes and needs were herded together in the classroom. Such that when the teachers found that such misbehaviours were not outrageous or dangerous, they just ignored them. Still, others stated that when the teacher ignores the problem, he or she is just postponing it. The following were the general views from the teachers:

You can't keep on punishing any misbehaviour in the classroom. It's better to pretend as if nothing has happened in the classroom.

In view of how teachers dealt with the various forms of students' resistance behaviours in the classroom, it was clear that most classroom teachers exercised power in a dominant manner such as using coercion, threats, intimidation, reprimands and punishment. This in itself meant that most teachers were dealing with the symptoms of the problem without finding out the points of origin of such behaviours from the students. For example, when students were offered something far outside their mental model such as the beliefs about the nature of teaching, learning and activities that take place in the classroom, students were bound to reject implicitly and symbolically the contents and skills taught as evidenced in the study. Secondly, it also signaled that teachers view students' resistance behaviour not as a form of student's communication strategy, but as an act of indiscipline case.

4.3.7 Summary of the Findings and Discussions

This chapter has presented the various forms and causes of the students' resistance behaviours. The most common forms of the students' resistance behaviour which were deliberately displayed by the students in the classroom included noise making, silence,

failure to hand in assignments on time, prolonged yawning, diverted attention and so on. Noisemaking was the commonest form of resistance behaviour.

While students saw their behaviours as a means of communicating their feelings, attitudes and emotions towards certain issues that affected their acquisition of knowledge, teachers, on the other hand, tended to view such acts as a challenge to their established authority in the classrooms. The two players in the teaching and learning situation interpreted resistance behaviour differently. The lack of common understanding might make it difficult to achieve harmonious relationship conducive to teaching and learning

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

What emerged from this study is that students' resistance behaviour takes many forms and occurs under different circumstances. It is mostly embodied in gestures and actions.

Given the way students' resistance behaviours were interpreted and dealt with, it was apparent that most teachers did not recognize it as a form of communication strategy that students adopted in the classrooms but as a discipline issue that needed to be uprooted at all costs. This could be attributed to institutionalized dominance of the teacher in relation to his/her students in the classroom. The tendency was to resort to punitive measures whenever resistance behaviour was encountered without investigating the underlying cause.

The failure to appreciate the communicative role of apparently disruptive behaviour contributes to poor teaching and learning in schools. If teachers appreciate that disruptive behaviour is not always negative and warranting sanctions, a better teaching and learning environment could be created. The 'unacceptable' behaviour would form the basis for adjustments in delivery of lessons and treatment of students which would improve classroom relations and the teaching process.

The study was guided by post-structurist resistance theory. Basically, this theory of

resistance contends that students' resistance behaviour is in multiple forms and is socially constructed. Students deliberately displayed such behaviours symbolically by using gestures and actions in contexts where they perceived themselves to be powerless.

The findings of this study revealed that in Malawian schools, students' resistance behaviour as a form of communication existed in multiple forms in the classroom and was interpreted differently by the main actors who are the teachers and the students in the classroom because they did not have shared meanings in interpreting the signs and symbols that were being made by the students in the classrooms. The apparent "communication breakdown" that occurred might create situations not conducive to teaching and learning largely due to sour student-teacher relations which might be engendered.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: A GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS FOR A STUDENT

In this study I am interested in your personal knowledge and views regarding the various forms of the resistance behaviours that you display in class, the causes of such behaviors and how your teachers interpret and deal them.

- . Some of the terms that I will use in this interview will be clarified to you.
- . Be assured that the information that you will provide will be treated as strictly confidential.
- . Thank you for accepting to be interviewed.

Questions for in-depth interviews

1. What are the forms of students' resistance behaviours/protests/misbehaviours as the form of communication in the classroom?

2. What are the causes of resistance behaviours/indiscipline in the classroom?

3. How do teachers interpret students' resistance behaviours in the classroom?

4. How do teachers deal with students' resistance behaviours in the classroom?

End of the interview

Thank you very much for your valuable information

APPENDIX 2: A GUIDE FOR IN- DEPTH INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS

I would like to inform you that I am looking for information from you on the various forms of students' resistance behaviours, the causes of resistance behaviours and how you interpret and deal with the students' resistance behaviours in the classroom.

- . The information that you will provide will add to the existing body of knowledge on the causes of indiscipline in secondary schools.
- . Be assured that the information that you provide will be treated as strictly confidential.
- . You are kindly requested to answer all questions.

Questions for in-depth interviews

1. What are the forms of students' resistance behaviours/protests/misbehaviour/indiscipline in the classroom?

2. What the causes of resistance behaviours/indiscipline in the classroom? -----

3. How do you interpret the students' resistance behaviours/protests/misbehaviour in the classroom?

4. How do teachers deal with students' resistance behaviours in the classroom?

End of the interview

Thank you for your information

APPENDIX 3: A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION REVIEW

I was guided by the following in reviewing some of the documents such as attendance registers, discipline files and punishment book:

In attendance registers I was trying to check on the number of the absentees and the reasons for that.

I also reviewed punishment books, wall charts and discipline files to check on the common causes of indiscipline in classrooms, how teachers deal with indiscipline in classrooms.

APPENDIX 4: A GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The focus group discussions were guided by the following

- (a) Forms of the students' resistance behaviours in the classroom.
- (b) Causes of students' resistance behaviours/indiscipline in the classroom.
- (c) How teachers interpret students' resistance behaviours
/protests/indiscipline/misbehaviour in the classroom.
- (d) How teachers deal with students' resistance behaviours in the classroom.

Thank you very much

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE OF AN ANECDOTAL PAGE

Name of school-----

Name of class-----

Subject-----

Date-----

Description of students' resistance behaviour-----

Description of the circumstances under which the behaviour is evoked-----

Number of period(s) -----