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**UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG
ADOLESCENTS IN A RURAL SITE OF
SOUTHERN ZAMBIA**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The study of school dropout in Zambia is still in its infancy. Apart from the countrywide annual surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education, no in-depth study on school dropout seems to have been conducted. These surveys have consistently indicated that school dropout is most common among rural adolescents. Thus, this study sought to have an in-depth understanding of the factors that influenced rural adolescents to drop out of school by drawing a purposive sample of 10 dropouts, 10 parents of the dropouts, five teachers from the school attended by the dropouts in a rural site of southern Zambia. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data, which were analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis method.

The following themes emerged as factors that influenced adolescents to drop out of school: cultural factors; family and community factors; and school factors. Each of these themes had sub-themes under it. Cultural factors comprised the following sub-themes: initiation influences girls to drop out of school; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; and pregnancy as a route to marriage, all of which affected girls more. Family and community factors included the following sub-themes: lack of role models; education is a waste of time; bad influence from peers; lack of parental involvement in their children's education; and low socioeconomic status. School factors comprised two sub-themes: no help from teachers, and lack of students' support system in school. These findings have supported the core argument that I have espoused in this dissertation, namely that factors that influence school dropout are inextricably interwoven. Therefore, I have proposed that in order for school dropout interventional measures to be effective, they need to apply a holistic approach, which takes into account influences emanating from broad contextual factors.

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DEDICATION

To my dear wife, Soneni and our two great children, Bona and Sibusiso.

Thank you ...

University of Cape Town

ABBREVIATIONS

ACOG	American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
ASCA	American School Counsellor Association
BSAC	British South Africa Company
EFA	Education for All
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SES	Socioeconomic Status
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization
UNZA	University of Zambia
WHO	World Health Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION	I
ABSTRACT	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
DEDICATION	VI
ABBREVIATIONS.....	VII

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 MY INTEREST IN THE RESEARCH AREA.....	5
1.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA.....	5
1.4 EDUCATION IN PRE AND COLONIAL ZAMBIA	8
1.5 EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA AT INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER.....	10
1.6 CONCLUSION	14
1.7 AN OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION	14

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL DROPOUT.....	17
2.1 INTRODUCTION	17
2.2 DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE OF SCHOOL DROPOUT	17
2.3 CULTURE AND SCHOOL DROPOUT	24
2.4 FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL DROPOUT	31
2.5 CONCLUSION	37

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL DROPOUT	39
3.1 INTRODUCTION	39
3.2 SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOL DROPOUT.....	40
3.3 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL DROPOUT.....	46
3.4 CONCLUSION	55

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDIES DONE IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT	57
4.1 INTRODUCTION	57
4.2 SCHOOL DROPOUT AND ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY	57
4.3 BROADER SCHOOL DROPOUT FACTORS	68
4.4 CONCLUSION	72
4.5 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE ON SCHOOL DROPOUT.....	73
4.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	76

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY	77
5.1 INTRODUCTION	77
5.2 RATIONALE FOR USING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	77
5.2.1 <i>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</i>	78
5.2.1.1 Sampling in IPA.....	80
5.2.1.2 Use of retrospective accounts in IPA	81
5.3 TRIANGULATION.....	83
5.3.1 <i>Integration of triangulated data</i>	85
5.4 SELECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	87
5.5 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITE	89
5.5.1 <i>Description of Haacizibe Village</i>	89
5.5.2 <i>Description of research participants</i>	93
5.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES.....	94
5.6.1 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	94
5.6.2 <i>Focus group discussions</i>	95
5.7 PROCEDURE	97
5.8 DATA ANALYSIS	101
5.9 DATA INTERPRETATION IN IPA.....	102
5.10 HOW I DID THE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	104
5.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	108
5.12 CONCLUSION	109

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	110
6.1 INTRODUCTION	110
6.2. CULTURAL FACTORS.....	111
6.2.1 <i>Initiation influences girls to drop out of school</i>	112

6.2.2 Parents forcing their daughters into early marriages.....	115
6.2.3 Pregnancy as a route to marriage.....	120
6.3 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY FACTORS	123
6.3.1 Lack of role models.....	124
6.3.2 Education is a waste of time.....	126
6.3.3 Bad influence from peers	128
6.3.4 Lack of parental involvement in children’s education	130
6.3.5 Low socioeconomic status.....	133
6.4 SCHOOL FACTORS.....	136
6.4.1 No help from teachers.....	136
6.4.2 Lack of students’ support system in school	139
6.5 CONCLUSION	140

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF CULTURAL FACTORS.....	142
7.1 INTRODUCTION	142
7.2 CULTURAL FACTORS.....	142
7.2.1 Initiation influences girls to drop out of school.....	143
7.2.1.1 Sexual objectification in the female initiation rite.....	147
7.3 PARENTS FORCING THEIR DAUGHTERS INTO EARLY MARRIAGES.....	151
7.3.1 Girls at the mercy of parents’ decisions.....	155
7.4 PREGNANCY AS A ROUTE TO MARRIAGE	158
7.5 CONCLUSION	164

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY FACTORS	165
8.1 INTRODUCTION	165
8.2 LACK OF ROLE MODELS	165
8.3 EDUCATION IS A WASTE OF TIME	168
8.4 BAD INFLUENCE FROM PEERS.....	172
8.5 LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION.....	175
8.6 LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.....	181
8.7 CONCLUSION	184

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL FACTORS	186
9.1 INTRODUCTION	186
9.2 NO HELP FROM TEACHERS	186
9.2.1 <i>Application of Finn’s school dropout models</i>	194
9.2.1.1 Participation-identification model	194
9.2.1.2 Frustration-self esteem model	195
9.3 LACK OF STUDENTS’ SUPPORT SYSTEM IN SCHOOL	197
9.4 CONCLUSION	203

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION.....	205
10.1 INTRODUCTION	205
10.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS	205
10.2.1 <i>Cultural factors</i>	206
10.2.2 <i>Family and community factors</i>	208
10.2.3 <i>School factors</i>	210
10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CULTURAL PRACTICES	211
10.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES	212
10.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	213
10.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	216
10.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	218
10.8 CLOSURE	220
REFERENCES	222

APPENDICES	234
APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTER	235
APPENDIX B: AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	236
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM	237
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DROPOUTS	238
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS	240
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS	241
APPENDIX G: GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH DROPOUTS	242
APPENDIX H: GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS	243
APPENDIX I: GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH TEACHERS	244

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: COMPLETION RATES FOR LUSAKA PROVINCE (URBAN)	2
TABLE 2: COMPLETION RATES FOR COPPERBELT PROVINCE (URBAN)	2
TABLE 3: COMPLETION RATES FOR CENTRAL PROVINCE (URBAN)	2
TABLE 4: COMPLETION RATES FOR SOUTHERN PROVINCE (RURAL).....	2
TABLE 5: COMPLETION RATES FOR NORTHERN PROVINCE (RURAL)	2
TABLE 6: COMPLETION RATES FOR LUAPULA PROVINCE (RURAL).....	3
TABLE 7: COMPLETION RATES FOR NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCE (RURAL).....	3
TABLE 8: COMPLETION RATES FOR WESTERN PROVINCE (RURAL)	3
TABLE 9: COMPLETION RATES FOR EASTERN PROVINCE (RURAL)	3
TABLE 10: FEMALE DROPOUTS	93
TABLE 11: MALE DROPOUTS	93

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: A TYPICAL HOMESTEAD IN HAACIZIBE VILLAGE	91
FIGURE 2: A TOMATO GARDEN BELONGING TO ONE OF THE FEMALE DROPOUTS IN HAACIZIBE VILLAGE	91
FIGURE 3: THE ROADSIDE MARKET IN HAACIZIBE VILLAGE	92
FIGURE 4: BBOMBO BASIC SCHOOL	92
FIGURE 5: THE CYCLIC PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS	107

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this dissertation, I investigate factors influencing adolescents to drop out of school in a rural site of southern Zambia. Annual surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education have consistently indicated that school dropout is most common among rural adolescents. Yet, no in -depth study seems to have been conducted to find out the reasons why rural adolescents drop out of school in Zambia.

Because of a number of educational challenges, not least, the low completion rates especially in developing countries, a world conference on Education for All (EFA) was convened in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand (see United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, 2000). One of the recommendations made at the EFA conference was that all countries around the globe should ensure that they provide basic education to all their citizens by the year 2000.

Among other things, in order to fulfil this recommendation made at the Jomtien EFA conference, Zambia as did many other countries in Africa, introduced free basic education in 1996. In addition, a policy that allowed girls who got pregnant to continue with school and/or return to school after giving birth was introduced (Ministry of Education, 1996). In spite of these pronouncements made by the Ministry of Education to make basic education accessible to all, a number of young people in the rural areas especially continue to drop out of school even before completing basic school. Thus, questions necessarily follow: Why is it that in spite of the Ministry of Education offering free basic education and allowing adolescent mothers to continue with school, Zambia has continued to have young women and men leaving school even before completing basic school? Where is the problem? Could it be with schools? Could it be with families and/or communities where the young people who leave school prematurely come from? All these are critical questions which I have endeavoured to address in this dissertation.

Below I present statistics showing completion rates at the seventh grade level for all the nine provinces of Zambia as obtained from the Ministry of Education headquarters in 2006:

Table 1: Completion rates for Lusaka Province (Urban)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	79.86%	80.61%	82.44%	84.12%	90.39%
Female	72.42%	71.42%	77.09%	82.12%	91.28%

Table 2: Completion rates for Copperbelt Province (Urban)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	85.64%	82.12%	86.56%	92.07%	97.38%
Female	77.18%	75.74%	81.04%	85.29%	95.93%

Table 3: Completion rates for Central Province (Urban)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	68.67%	71.56%	78.26%	85.13%	93.16%
Female	58.70%	59.60%	68.21%	75.86%	82.22%

Table 4: Completion rates for Southern Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	74.27%	75.05%	78.90%	86.87%	99.34%
Female	63.27%	64.77%	69.90%	75.01%	85.77%

Table 5: Completion rates for Northern Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	64.75%	67.71%	75.49%	83.98%	92.25%
Female	44.42%	43.20%	49.94%	56.45%	64.75%

Table 6: Completion rates for Luapula Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	52.30%	52.58%	57.44%	62.79%	71.87%
Female	36.82%	36.53%	41.99%	43.20%	54.55%

Table 7: Completion rates for North-Western Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	59.52%	68.51%	69.42%	74.90%	83.70%
Female	41.21%	46.20%	50.18%	55.88%	61.69%

Table 8: Completion rates for Western Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	53.40%	52.72%	60.37%	66.69%	75.50%
Female	45.04%	43.43%	49.45%	54.72%	62.48%

Table 9: Completion rates for Eastern Province (Rural)

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	50.93%	49.71%	53.84%	56.17%	65.51%
Female	37.16%	36.42%	39.65%	42.41%	47.99%

As can be seen from the above statistics, while low completion rates are mainly common among females in the rural areas, it seems the problem goes beyond gender issues- a number of boys also drop out of school. Thus for this study, I selected a purposive sample of young women and men who had dropped out of school from Haacizibe Village, a rural site in southern Zambia.

The study of school dropout seems to still be in its infancy in Africa. Most studies (see Fuller, Singer & Keiley, 1995; Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Mensch, Clark, Lloyd & Erulkar, 2001; Kaufman, De Wet & Jonathan, 2001; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Duncan, 1988; Johnson-Hanks, 2002), have largely focused on studying school dropout in relation to pregnancy related issues among female adolescents. School dropout research has mainly been conducted in the developed world (e.g. Rumberger, 1983;

Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001; Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe & Carlson, 2000; Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997). These studies have demonstrated the complexity and multifaceted nature of the school dropout problem- it cannot be attributed to a single factor, nor yet to a single set of factors. Therefore, the aim of this study was to have a broader and deeper understanding of factors that influenced rural adolescents to drop out of school in Zambia.

In order to better understand these factors, I decided to use qualitative research methodology. Specifically, I used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method to unravel the meaning of the participants' experiences with regard to school dropout (see Willig, 2001; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). Even if school dropout research has largely been dominated by quantitative studies, some researchers, particularly in the recent past, have recognized the advantages of using qualitative research methods in the study of school dropout. Smyth and Hattam (2002) and Lee and Burkam (2003), for instance, have argued that capturing the voices of the young people who drop out of school can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the school dropout problem.

To further deepen and broaden the understanding of school dropout, I have adopted in this study what I have called a "holistic approach". Holism has several meanings, which I cannot cover, nor yet need to in this dissertation. For purposes of this study, I use the term "holistic" to mean a contextualised approach of studying school dropout that takes into account the cultural perspective, family and community perspective, and school perspective, as opposed to focusing on only one of these perspectives. I thus selected a purposive sample of dropouts, their parents, and teachers from the school that the dropouts attended (see chapter five for a detailed description of the sample). Below I present a section on the origins of my interest in this area of research.

1.2 My interest in the research area

My interest in this area of research emerged first from my experiences as a young person growing up in a predominantly poor rural environment of southern Zambia. In this environment, I witnessed a number of young people, some of them my close relatives give up their educational dreams due to a number of constraints. In this regard, I think of my immediate elder sister who in 1987 at a tender age of 16, dropped out of school in the eighth grade due to pregnancy. Within less than three months of dropping out of school, my sister got married to the man, a seventh grade school dropout, who had impregnated her. This experience with my elder sister left a deep impression on me and without doubt has had an influence on my decision to venture into this area of research. Secondly, I had a privilege of teaching at a junior secondary school in Lusaka City from 1997 to 1998. During this period, I experienced first hand, the constraints such as low motivation, lack of teaching resources, inadequate infrastructure, and so on which teachers faced as they executed, (or tried to execute) their duties.

These and many other experiences that I had as a young person growing up in rural southern Zambia and as a junior secondary school teacher in Lusaka City, kindled a longing in me to dedicate myself to venture into attempting to understand school dropout. For me therefore, the pursuit of this doctoral study is not just a fleeting academic spark, it is a flame emanating from the fire that was largely kindled during my many experiences in the earlier parts of my life. In order that we appreciate the developmental trends of education in Africa and Zambia in particular, I in the next few sections provide a brief historical background of education in Africa and Zambia.

1.3 A brief history of education in Africa

Before the introduction of formal western education by religious missionary societies and colonial governments, as UNESCO (2000) argues, Africa had a form of education that gave guidelines for a good life among its people. Unlike the western education, however, African traditional education was largely transmitted through oral tradition and/or observation. The main goal of traditional education was to inculcate in young

people the behaviour and knowledge needed for them to function as dependable members of society who would be able, not only to learn the traditions of their tribes, but also be able to pass these traditions on to the future generations. In addition to this informal teaching-learning that mainly happened vicariously, traditional education was passed on to children through organised rituals such as initiation rites where youngsters were put in organised traditional schools to learn various aspects of their cultures. These ceremonies were organised to mark special events in people's lives such as entry into puberty, marriage, and others (see Van Gennep, 1960; Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001). Through these methods of teaching, youngsters in traditional Africa were able to learn what they needed to know to be able to survive. For example, they were able to learn various methods of cultivation, animal husbandry, hunting, gathering wild fruits, crafts and many other skills (UNESCO, 2000).

Religious missionaries were the first ones to bring formal education to the continent of Africa, before political colonial masters came on the scene (Kelly, 1999). The provision of education by religious faiths was done not so much as a means to bring economic development, but rather as a mode of facilitating evangelism. In order for evangelism to flourish, the local people needed to learn some basics of reading, writing and numeracy. Thus, along side evangelistic missions that were set up by various missionaries in Africa, schools were established to teach literacy and numeracy. The Christian faith was the largest early contributor of formal education in Africa (UNESCO, 2000).

In addition to Christianity, the Islamic faith also made some contribution to the introduction of formal education to Africa. However, as UNESCO (1982) argues, Islam did not have as much impact in the provision of education in Africa as did the Christian faith both in terms of geographical areas covered and in terms of depth and breadth of curricula content. The geographical areas of coverage by Islam were mainly confined to areas of North Africa, the East coast, and areas around the horn of Africa. With regard to curricula content, Islam mainly concentrated on teaching reading and reciting Arabic. On the other hand, while maintaining evangelism as the main function, Christianity still managed to provide curricula that were richer in areas

of literacy and numeracy and was established in many countries throughout the continent.

According to UNESCO (2000), starting about the fifteenth century, political colonial masters started joining their religious counterparts who had come to establish religious missions in Africa. The Portuguese with their ardent pursuit of business in the area of trade were the first to arrive. Since the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, the colonization of Sub-Saharan Africa started and did not end until about fifteen years ago when South Africa gained her independence from the apartheid regime. Thus, since the establishment of colonial regimes in various parts of Africa, a partnership (see Kelly, 1999) was established between colonial masters and religious missionaries in the provision of formal education to local Africans.

While the religious missionaries and colonial governments joined forces to provide education to their African subjects (UNESCO, 2000; Kelly, 1999), the venture was largely a mere drop in the ocean as the number of schools was ridiculously small in relation to the enormous numbers of Africans who needed the formal western education. Many Africans needed to get into school to be able to fit into the inevitable lifestyle that had been introduced by the colonial masters. Western education therefore, became an important means by which local people could acquire the knowledge that they needed to break free from the bondage of ignorance and poverty.

As I have already hinted, access to education during this time was limited. A look at the statistics provided by UNESCO (1982) will better portray the picture of how few the schools were at that time. In 1960, the primary school gross enrolment ratio in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa was a mere 36 percent, compared to 67 percent in Asia and 73 percent in Latin America during the same period. In Francophone territories, statistics were at 38 percent (50 percent in the Belgian colonies and about 31 percent in the French colonies). In the Anglophone territories, enrolment statistics stood at 40 percent. Looking at these statistics, it is not surprising that most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa had more than 90 percent of their nationals still illiterate at the time of attaining independence. For instance, according to the figures quoted by UNESCO (1982), at independence there were only 90 African graduates from the University of

Ghana, 72 in Sierra Leone and 29 in Malawi. When Botswana became independent in 1966, local people only occupied about four percent of the key positions in government. At independence, in 1964, Zambia only had 100 university graduates (Sanyal, 1976). Having painted with a broad brush the picture of the history of education on the African continent, I in the next section present a brief history of education in Zambia during the pre and colonial era.

1.4 Education in pre and colonial Zambia

As the Department of African Education (1952) observes, the provision of education in Zambia during the pre-colonial era cannot be understood without mentioning the name Francois Coillard. Francois Coillard, back in the year 1885, established the first ever religious mission station at Sesheke, in western Zambia. This was after the signing of an agreement between the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and Chief Lewanika of the Barotse territory. The Sesheke mission thus became the source from which several other mission stations sprang throughout Zambia. Within forty years of the Sesheke mission being in existence, the number of missionary societies operating in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) increased to sixteen. This may sound modest; however, it was no mean achievement at all, as these missionary societies did not receive any financial assistance from the British South Africa Company (BSAC), the company that was given the responsibility to run Northern Rhodesia on behalf of the British colonial government at the time (Kelly, 1999).

Following the agreement that had been signed between the BSAC and Chief Lewanika, the Barotse National School was established in 1907 and remained the only school that was allowed to use public funds by the BSAC until 1925. During this time, the BSAC administration established no body in Northern Rhodesia to see to the educational matters of Africans. Only in 1922 did the colonial office in London establish an advisory committee to oversee educational matters in the British Tropical African region (Kelly, 1999).

Despite the reluctance of the BSAC to support the establishment of schools for Africans in Northern Rhodesia, a sizeable number of schools were established during

this period. In 1915, for instance, the London Missionary Society established a girls' boarding school at Mbereshi. The inauguration of the Mbereshi girls' school and its successful operation encouraged other missionary societies to open more girls' schools in other locations of the country. By 1925, other girls' schools had been established at Mabumbu in Barotseland by the Paris Mission, at Chipembi by the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. Sisters of the White Fathers' Mission also established girls' schools at Chilubula, Kayambi and Ngumbo in the northern parts of Zambia (Kelly, 1999).

The year 1924 (see Sanyal, 1976), holds some historical significance for Zambia in that this is the year the then Northern Rhodesia, which had hitherto been administered by the BSAC was officially handed back to the British colonial office. In that year therefore, Northern Rhodesia officially became a British Protectorate, after having been in the hands of the BSAC for about forty years. A year after attaining her protectorate status, Northern Rhodesia had for the first time in her history a Department of Native Education created, to among other things, see to the coordination of the development of education for Africans in the territory. Among the many other noteworthy educational developments that took place in Northern Rhodesia during this period, as Kelly indicates, was the visit of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1924.

In their report, the Phelps-Stokes Commission (see Kelly, 1999), concluded that secular education was to be the task of the colonial administration. The Commission also recommended that the colonial administration needed to participate in the coordination and financing of schools established by religious missionary societies. In Northern Rhodesia therefore, one of the first effects of the recommendations made by the Phelps-Stokes Commission was the introduction of stipulations governing the provision of assistance for mission schools by the colonial government.

Following the establishment of a department to look into the affairs of native education and the recommendations made by the Phelps-Stokes Commission, the colonial government started being more active in the provision of funding for setting up more schools in Northern Rhodesia. However, it was not until 1937 that the funds

for setting up educational institutions became meaningfully available as to allow a number of learning institutions to be established. The period 1937 to 1951, therefore, as Kelly (1999) indicates was characterised by an unprecedented expansion in the educational sector in Northern Rhodesia. During this period, a number of primary schools, secondary schools, vocational training colleges, and teachers' training colleges were established in various locations of the country.

The establishment of primary schools in various locations of the country was inevitably followed by tremendous increases in the enrolment of African students into secondary schools in the period between 1953 and 1963 (Sanyal, 1976). For instance, the enrolment into secondary school in the period 1956 to 1957 soared to 1,198; in the period 1961 to 1962, it rose to 3,794; and in 1963, the enrolment hit an all time high of 6,440. In addition, the Munali Secondary School students in Lusaka City took an A-level examination in 1957 for the first time in Northern Rhodesia. In 1963, two other secondary schools in addition to Munali, started offering A-level subjects to African students who had achieved outstanding results in the School Certificate examination. These were: Canisius College for boys, which was run by the Jesuit Fathers; and Chipembi Secondary School for girls, controlled by the Methodist Mission. As can be seen from these statistics, by 1963, on the threshold of attaining her independence from the British, Zambia's educational system was only modestly developed. Thus, in the next section, I present the educational scenario in Zambia at independence and the period after.

1.5 Education in Zambia at independence and after

Zambia attained her independence from the British Government on October 24, 1964. At that time (see Sanyal, 1976), two critical challenges faced the country in the provision of education. First, Zambia was faced with the challenge of eliminating racially segregated schools that had until then been rife. The second challenge, which I think was a far bigger challenge, was the need to expand the educational system to cater for the rising demand. There was an urgent need to build more schools and training institutions at various levels in order to make available the urgently needed educated Zambians.

The reason for the shortage of educated Zambians at independence was mainly due to the dual system of education that had existed during colonial days whereby Africans attended impoverished schools with the barest minimum resources. In addition, these poorly funded schools for Africans were few and far between. On the other hand, Europeans attended schools which were well equipped and well funded. Because of this, Zambia only had very few properly educated local people at the time of independence. For instance, at independence, Zambia only had 1,200 secondary school graduates, and only 100 university graduates (Sanyal, 1976). It has to be noted that all the Zambian nationals who had university degrees at that time, had obtained them from outside Zambia as there was no university in the country at the time. It was not until 1966 that a local university was established in the Zambian capital, Lusaka (Mwanakatwe, 1968).

Owing to these shortages of educated work force in various sectors, expansion and diversification of the educational system were given priority in the First National Development Plan (1966-1970) (Office of National Development and Planning, 1966). The main objectives in the First National Development Plan were:

- a. That one-third of the local primary school leavers proceed to Junior Secondary School;
 - b. That two-thirds of all form two (grade 9) leavers should proceed to Senior secondary;
 - c. That the curriculum at the senior secondary level should be diversified to some extent without prejudicing the academic progress of pupils with potential for graduate studies or higher professional courses;
 - d. That selection for higher education for the University of Zambia and for certain courses should be based at the 'O' level or its equivalent;
 - e. That the efficiency of secondary schools should be improved through the use of better equipment and the increased supply of qualified teachers
- (Mwanakatwe, 1968, p. 61).

This ambitious expansion programme saw the establishment of 20 secondary schools in various locations of all the nine provinces of Zambia. Further, in 1966, after many

years of waiting for an institution of higher learning, the University of Zambia (UNZA) was founded. The following faculties at the UNZA were planned for in the First National Development Plan: faculty of medicine; faculty of engineering; faculty of agriculture; law faculty; and faculty of education (Mwanakatwe, 1968).

The Second National Development Plan (1972-1976) (see Valdelin, 1983) emphasised both expansion and improvement of the quality of education. This meant increasing the capacity of schools, and reorganising and/or redesigning school curricula at various levels. The reorganised curricula included a range of practical subjects offered at secondary school level. Further, for the first time, the educational needs of children who were physically challenged in various ways were given attention.

By the mid-seventies, however, the high numbers of students graduating from various schools were already beginning to overwhelm the small Zambian economy, so that unemployment soon became a worrying issue. The government took two steps to address this challenge. Firstly, the government encouraged the idea of improving the rural sector. This declaration encouraged people to look more to the land and go into farming rather than depending on white-collar jobs that were visibly dwindling. Secondly, the government embarked on a major exercise to reform the educational system under the theme “Education for Development”. Following various deliberations and consultations, a draft educational reform document was thus produced in March 1976 (Ministry of Education, 1976). Improvements were made to the 1976 draft document and in 1977, a final educational reform document with proposals and recommendations was produced (Ministry of Education, 1977).

The aim of the Third National Development Plan (1979- 1983) was to reorient the educational system towards the implementation of the 1977 educational reform (Kelly, 1999). At primary school level, the Third National Development Plan aimed at mobilising resources for all seven- year- olds to enter school and for all children who completed grade four to enter grade five and continue until they reached grade seven. At junior secondary school level, the aim was to ensure that at least 20 percent of grade seven students proceeded into grade eight. A total of 11,000 grade nine places

were to be created. Senior secondary was not a priority area in the Third National Development Plan and as such, no expansion of the sector was planned. However, new curricula for grades 10-12 were to be designed and introduced. During this period also, emphasis was given to increasing the number of trained teachers to match the increased numbers of students in schools (Ministry of Education, 1977).

During the Interim National Development Plan in 1987, the focus was on improving the quality of education and to increase access to it through:

1. Increased production, supply and distribution of educational materials, the development of a new curriculum to meet the demands of the nation and conducting in-service training directed towards the new curriculum.
2. Quantitative and qualitative expansion of more widespread educational opportunities at basic level.

(Kelly, 1999, p. 187).

To be able to meet the target of enabling every Zambian to be able to have access to primary education by the year 2000, it was decided during the Interim National Development Plan that enrolment into primary school would be increased. Due to the lack of an adequate number of trained teachers and inadequate infrastructure, double sessions, and in some cases, triple sessions of students in a day, were introduced in the primary school sector (Kelly, 1999).

The period of the Fourth National Development Plan (1989-1993) also continued with the focus on the implementation of the 1977 educational reforms (Kelly, 1999). Specifically, the Fourth National Development Plan centred on ensuring that existing educational systems were working as they should. This meant ensuring that every school was implementing the educational policies that had been put in place to ensure that universal primary education would be attained by the year 2000.

Seeing the increased primary school access due to the dual and triple session systems that had been introduced at primary school level, provision was made in the Fourth

National Development Plan to increase grade eight and nine school places. Emphasis was also placed on the expansion of teacher training facilities. No major expansions were provided for in the technical education and university education sectors. In short, as Kelly (1999) observes, the fourth National development Plan largely focused on issues of quality improvement and cost-effectiveness. Below I present a conclusion that summarises the aspects I have covered in this introductory chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I have presented the rationale for this study. I have argued that in spite of school dropout being a common problem among rural adolescents in Zambia, it seems to be poorly understood due to the lack of in-depth studies on the subject. Further, I have shown that unlike in the developed world, school dropout in Africa is not well understood mainly due to studies on the subject that have been limited not just in number, but in scope as well (most studies have focused on pregnancy related issues among female adolescents). Thus, I have presented an argument explaining why I decided to use a qualitative, interpretative, holistic approach to study the school dropout problem. Finally, I have provided a brief historical background of education in Africa and Zambia. Below I present a section outlining the chapters contained in this dissertation.

1.7 An outline of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises ten chapters. In chapter one, an introductory chapter, I establish the rationale for conducting this study on school dropout. Here I indicate that school dropout is poorly understood in Africa and Zambia in particular due to studies that have been limited both in number and in scope. I also justify my choice of the IPA method, a qualitative interpretative method as my interpretive framework in this study. Finally, I provide an historical background of education in Africa and Zambia.

In chapters two and three, I review studies that have investigated school dropout in the developed world. I have segmented these studies in two broad categories. Firstly, in chapter two I present studies that have examined school dropout in relation to the

social environment in which students live. In chapter three, I review studies that have studied school dropout in relation to the school environment. While I present the studies in these separate categories, my interpretation and analysis of the literature revealed that school dropout factors are interlinked- there are no purely family and community school dropout factors, nor are there school dropout factors purely pertaining to the school environment. This finding further supports the rationale for my using a holistic approach in this study.

In chapter four, also a literature review chapter, I review studies that have been conducted on school dropout in Africa. Here I indicate that the majority of studies conducted on school dropout in Africa have tended to limit the study of school dropout to pregnancy related issues among adolescent females. I argue in relation to the literature from studies conducted in the developed world that school dropout is a complex problem which cannot be narrowed down to a limited number of factors. Emerging out of the limitations in the study of school dropout in Africa and Zambia in particular, I present at the end of the chapter a set of questions which guided this study.

The methodology that I used in this study is described in chapter five. In order to have a more in-depth understanding of the school dropout problem, I used the IPA method. The IPA method also provided an appropriate interpretive framework due to its use of the idiographic approach and the integration of individual cases. This provided me with an opportunity to see individual participants' perspectives on school dropout, but also the similarities and/or differences in the participants' views on school dropout.

The findings for this study are presented in chapter six. In line with the holistic approach that I used in this study, I integrate the findings from dropouts, teachers, and parents. Apart from providing a more in-depth understanding of school dropout, the integration of the findings also provides an opportunity for triangulation, which increases the credibility of the findings (see Patton, 2002).

In this study, I discuss the findings in three chapters. In all the three chapters, I discuss the findings from the dropouts, teachers, and parents simultaneously. Chapter seven,

the first discussion chapter, discusses how societal cultural practices were found to hinder the schooling of adolescent females especially. Due to the cultural practices that viewed women's roles as revolving around marriage and motherhood, girls tended to get inhibited in their school pursuit.

In chapter eight, I discuss the themes indicating how family and community factors influenced adolescents to drop out of school. A number of factors which were interconnected emerged here. Again, the connections between these factors indicate the complexity of the school dropout problem, which does not seem to warrant an atomistic approach if the problem is to be understood comprehensively.

Chapter nine discusses the school factors that were found to influence school dropout. Here in line with available literature from studies conducted in the developed world, I argue that conditions obtaining in schools can influence students to stay in school until graduation or drop out. However, the discussion of these findings also indicates that school dropout factors related to the school environment cannot be isolated from family and community factors. This further supports the holistic approach that I took in this study.

I end this dissertation with a conclusion in chapter ten. Here I present a summary of the three main themes, namely cultural factors, family and community factors, and school factors that emerged in this study as factors influencing rural adolescents to drop out of school. These factors were found to be interrelated. In view of this, I propose that in order for school dropout interventional measures to be effective, the school dropout problem should be viewed holistically, rather than in fragments. Arising from the findings, I make some recommendations to different stakeholders of education in Zambia. Finally, I present the limitations I encountered in the study and some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL DROPOUT

2.1 Introduction

In this first chapter of literature review, I review studies that have related school dropout to the social context in which students live. The social aspects that have been dealt with here include such aspects as the socioeconomic status (SES) of families, neighbourhood type, peer networks, ethnicity, race, cultural practices. I present the review in this chapter in three sections as follows: developmental perspective of school dropout; culture and school dropout; and family, community and school dropout.

2.2 Developmental perspective of school dropout

A number of studies (e.g. Alexander et al., 2001; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Jimerson et al., 2000), have shown that dropping out of school can be traced to as far back as one's childhood experiences. This literature argues firstly, that the quality of care that a child receives has an influence on schooling in later life. Secondly, the literature indicates that childhood experiences are not confined to the experiences emanating from the family circle, but encompass experiences from the larger community, including the school environment.

In a study conducted in the United States among adolescents, Garnier, Stein and Jacobs (1997), investigated how family and school environments influenced school dropout over an extended period of time. Garnier et al. followed the participants over a 19-year period. They used Interviews, questionnaires, and observations to collect data in three stages. The first round of data collection that the researchers conducted involved observation of mothers who were pregnant with the babies who were to be part of the sample in the longitudinal study. These women were observed in the final trimester of pregnancy. The idea of starting the observation before the children were born was to capture family aspects such as level of income, stability or lack of it,

lifestyle and see how these influenced later development of children vis-à-vis schooling. The second round of data collection happened when the children reached the age of six. Here the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) was administered to measure children's aptitudes in various areas. In addition to the WISC-R, children's academic performance was obtained from their teachers. The third and final round of data collection was conducted when the participants reached the ages of seventeen and nineteen. Here interviews and questionnaires were administered to the adolescents as they were old enough to be interviewed on their own.

In this study, Garnier et al. (1997) found that school dropout was determined by a multiplicity of factors at family, individual, and school levels. Specifically, they found that school dropout was related to SES, school performance, drug use, family circumstances. To this end, the researchers drew a conclusion:

... dropping out of school is a long-term multiply determined process beginning in childhood...The process of dropping out of high school is a complex chain of events that begins with a child's experiences within the early family environment (Garnier et al., 1997, pp. 413-14).

As evidenced in the Ganier et al. (1997) study, in order to have a better understanding of the school dropout problem, researchers need to view school dropout contextually as opposed to viewing it atomistically. It is in recognition of this that the core of my argument in this dissertation conceptualises school dropout as a problem that cannot be isolated from its context.

Similar to the approach used by Garnier et al. (1997), Jimerson et al. (2000) also in the United States, conducted a longitudinal study of children from the age of six months to the age of 19 years to investigate the childhood influences on school dropout. A sample comprising 177 children and their families was selected for this study. The researchers used various instruments to measure a number of school dropout factors pertaining to the family and those factors relating to the child as an individual. In relation to the family aspects, the researchers observed the way children were raised and supported by their parents at different stages of development. To measure the child factors of school dropout, Jimerson et al. used the following tests:

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised; Peabody Individual Achievement Test; The Child Behaviour Checklist-Teacher Form; Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test-Revised. In addition to these tests, teachers of the children were asked to rate the children in terms of peer competence.

Jimerson et al. (2000) employed descriptive statistics, regression models, and discriminant function analyses to investigate how school dropout was linked to individual, family, and school related factors. I find the researchers' approach of viewing school dropout from these three perspectives particularly useful. This "triadic" view which the researchers applied seems to have provided an opportunity to show the multidimensionality of school dropout. As did Garnier et al. (1997), Jimerson et al. (2000) argue that dropping out of school is a developmental, multifaceted process in which behaviour problems, nature of peer relationships, family's SES, child's academic performance, parental involvement in the education of their child, can be traced to earlier development in the child's life. Jimerson et al. also found that school dropout was linked to the quality of care and support a child received during infancy.

Alexander et al. (2001) also used a longitudinal approach in studying school dropout among students in the Baltimore area in the United States. A sample of 790 (55 percent African American and 45 percent White American) first grade students who had never repeated a grade was selected for the study. The data here were collected through interviews, questionnaires, school performance results. Broadly speaking, Alexander et al. related the school dropout problem to the individual attributes of the young people; sociodemographic aspects; experiences of the participants at school; attitudes of the young people toward school; evaluation by the young people of their own academic abilities; and evaluation by parents of their children's academic abilities. Similar to Jimerson et al. (2000) and Ganier et al. (1997), Alexander et al. (2001) viewed school dropout not as an event, but as a long term gradual process where the future dropout disengages himself/herself from school as a result of factors emanating from individual experiences, family, and school environment.

Alexander et al. (2001) argue that when a child is plagued by poor academic performance, he/she gets frustrated and inevitably, this impacts negatively on the child's self esteem. Over time, the frustration and lowered self esteem culminate into withdrawal from school. Accordingly therefore, "dropout under such circumstances is a means of escape from an environment that is psychologically punishing" (Alexander et al., 2001, p. 763). Alexander et al. also argue that when a child does not feel he/she is part of the school for sometime, he/she begins to alienate himself/herself from the school until finally he/she drops out. In addition, the researchers indicate the importance of the home environment in determining whether a child will stay in school or drop out. They argue that where parents are involved in encouraging the child to pursue his/her education through such activities as helping with homework; checking school progress, giving encouragement and so on, the child is less likely to drop out.

Also employing a longitudinal approach were Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992). Using a sample of 1,242 first grade Blacks from the impoverished Woodlawn area of the South Side of Chicago who were at risk of dropping out of school, Ensminger and Slusarcick ventured to find out whether early experiences had an influence on school dropout later in life. To measure the predisposition or lack of it to drop out of school, the researchers used a number of measures. Firstly, they used the participants' family background. Under the family background, the researchers included the following aspects: family SES, educational level of parents; family structure, and age at which the mother had her first child. Secondly, the researchers used school behaviour and performance of students. Here the focus was on the cognitive abilities of students and whether or not students behaved in socially acceptable ways. Involvement of the family in the education of children was measured by the family's participation in educational activities of the school such as belonging to the PTA and parents having interaction with teachers who taught their children. The fourth measure that Ensminger and Slusarcick used was the extent to which parents spent time talking to their children about school matters (academic and non-academic). Finally, parents were asked about the educational expectations that they had about their children; how much they wished their child would excel in his/her educational career.

I find the methodology used by Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) to be particularly useful in that it does not confine the study of school dropout to individual dropouts; it also looks at how family background, school performance, parental involvement, all impact school dropout. This approach seems to have enabled the researchers to show how broad and how interconnected factors that affect school dropout are.

A number of noteworthy findings came out of the Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) study. Firstly, the researchers report that students who got good grades (As and Bs) were unlikely to drop out even if they came from family backgrounds with adversities. On the other hand, students who got not so good grades (Cs and Ds) and were living in poverty only had about fifty percent chance of graduating. With regard to family structure, the researchers found that female students who were in mother-father families in first grade were more likely to graduate than their counterparts in mother-alone families. Having a mother who started having children in adolescence was found to have no effect on children's schooling.

In relation to school behaviour and performance, Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) report that children who were aggressive as early as elementary school were more likely to drop out of school twelve years later. In this respect, female students were found to have had higher chances of graduating because of their low levels of aggression. In terms of parental involvement in the education of their children, Ensminger and Slusarcick found that before children reached adolescence, there was no link between parents' involvement in school activities and whether or not their children graduated. However, the researchers found that by age sixteen, parental involvement in school activities began to matter in the education of children. Similar findings were reported for child-parent interaction about school as follows: at first grade level, there was no link between later graduation and whether or not parents read to their children, however, by age sixteen, it was found that those young people who confided in their parents about school matters or had parents and/or other adult family members help with home work, had a higher chance of graduating.

Further, those adolescents who reported that their parents were strict about school were found to have been more likely to graduate than their colleagues whose parents

were lenient. At first grade level, there was no relationship found between parents who had high educational hopes and expectations for their children and school dropout, however, by adolescence, a positive correlation was found; adolescents whose parents had high educational hopes and expectations had higher chances of graduating. Owing to these findings, Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) concluded that dropping out of school was something that got established early in the school career of a child. Thus, the researchers contend that if not attended to early enough, students' problems could lead to alienation from school which inevitably results in school dropout. Consequently, the researchers propose that prevention and interventional programmes to curb school dropout need to be introduced early in the school careers of children.

Alexander, Entwisle and Horsey (1997), similar to the approach that Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) took, examined school dropout starting in the first grade. They used a sample of first graders from the Baltimore City Public Schools who started school in 1982. Alexander et al. (1997) found school dropout to be linked to low SES, single parent homes, large families. The researchers also report as did Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) that students who got attached to the school environment as early as the first grade were less likely to drop out in later grades.

In a longitudinal study that followed a cohort of 651 participants from the Wisconsin area in the United States starting from elementary school to the time when they should have graduated from high school, Barrington and Hendricks (1989) examined early characteristics that distinguished students who dropped out and those who graduated. School records of these participants were used to assess aspects of school attendance, academic performance, and behavioural problems.

The findings from the Barrington and Hendricks (1989) study indicate that dropouts, unlike the graduates, exhibited erratic patterns of school attendance as early as the fifth grade. In the other findings, Barrington and Hendricks give an indication of the possibility of early prediction of school dropout. Firstly, they indicate that it was possible to predict which students would drop out of school with 66 percent accuracy as early as the third grade. Secondly, the researchers report that by grade five the

dropouts were twice as many times absent from school as their counterparts who graduated and about three times more absent by grade nine. The dropouts were also found to perform lower than the graduates and this could be deduced beginning in the early grades.

As has been exemplified in the studies reviewed in this section, there has been a considerable amount of attention given to the developmental conceptualization of the problem of school dropout. Scholars in the field have identified similar factors even though they sometimes use different conceptual labels. The developmental conceptualization of school dropout seems to be based on the principles of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of development (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989). In this theory, Bronfenbrenner identifies four interconnected systems that impinge on the development of a child as follows: microsystem; mesosystem; exosystem; and macrosystem. More recent scholars (e.g. Anderson & Mohr, 2003; Schweiger & O'Brien, 2005) have confirmed the validity of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a useful framework for conceptualising human development.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the microsystem constitutes the first influence that a child experiences from the immediate family circle. The interactions in the microsystem include relationships where the child has face-to-face interaction with the immediate members of the family. These relationships include the following interactions: child-parents; child-older siblings; child-other adult family members, and so on. Bronfenbrenner argues that the development of a child is inevitably influenced by these interactional processes.

In the mesosystem, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) further argues, the circle of interaction for the child extends to domains outside the family. These domains include: schools; churches; peer groups, and so on. The important thing to bear in mind about the mesosystem is that the child does not just get influenced by a single system, but is influenced by several other systems. Influences on the child here also come from the interactions that take place between systems, for instance, interactions between a

child's school and the family or interactions between the family and the church, and so on (Schweiger & O'Brien, 2005).

In the exosystem, the child does not interact directly with any particular system; the interaction is indirect. Bronfenbrenner (1979) gives the kind of job parents do as an example of the influence that a child experiences here. He argues that the parents' job largely determines the family's socioeconomic status, which in turn determines the quality of life that a child gets exposed to as he/she develops.

Finally in the macrosystem, Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains how the larger cultural beliefs and customs influence the development of a child. These include such issues as the way a particular culture socialises its people, for instance, along gender and/or age lines. They also include any customs that are performed in a particular cultural group. In addition to cultural beliefs, Bronfenbrenner argues that the macrosystem embodies the economic status of a country as a whole. Development, Bronfenbrenner argues, does not take place in a vacuum; it is a result of the on going interaction between the child and these four interconnected systems.

The literature in this section has demonstrated that school dropout is a developmental problem that begins early in the life of a child. Further, the review has shown that school dropout is influenced by a number of interconnected factors. Thus, to be in a position to better understand school dropout, one needs to be cognizant of the contextual factors that impinge on the development of dropouts or future dropouts starting in the early years. Moving from the developmental aspects of school dropout, I in the next section relate school dropout to culture.

2.3 Culture and school dropout

In this section, my main objective is to show the link that exists between schooling and culture. Thus, while I do review some few studies on school dropout, the main focus is on showing how cultural practices and beliefs can impact the pursuit of formal schooling in general.

Often people talk of cultural differences. It is not uncommon, for instance, to hear such expressions as, “their culture is different from ours” or “that is not allowed in our culture”. In essence these statements and any other such ones that refer to cultural diversities, point to differences between people. In other words, culture is largely what sets people apart. Thus, culture is an important aspect in determining a people’s identity. Culture as Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1989) argues constitutes an integral aspect in the process of human development.

Geertz cited in Triandis (1989) defines culture as that which guides people in societies in their day-to-day interactions with one another. Culture, Geertz further argues, determines the way individuals are socialised into mainstream society starting from childhood. What Geertz seems to tell us is that culture fulfils the same function as a map does. A map guides a traveller to wherever he/she wants to go. With time, however, the traveller does not need to have the physical map anymore; he/she can get to the destinations because the map has become internalised. Similarly, culture is that map which people internalise for guidance in their day today lives. Said differently, culture is the internal navigational device that guides a people. The internalisation process of cultural dictates can therefore arguably be said to begin from the moment a child is born and becomes part of the schemas that a child uses in its cognitive structures throughout life.

Each society has its own idiosyncratic way of socializing its people into beliefs and practices of its culture. However, while this is the case, broadly speaking, all cultures can be conceptualised as either collectivistic or individualistic (see Markus & Kitayama, 1991). As Markus and Kitayama explain, collectivistic cultures seek to conform the individual to the collective, while individualistic cultures strive after teaching the individual how to become independent from the collective.

Markus and Kitayama’s (1991) views on the conceptualization of the self in collectivistic societies seem to link well with the constructs of the social identity and self categorization theories which are also critical to the contextualization of human development. According to Tajfel (1982), identity formation is a process by which individuals determine who and what they are by relating themselves to the larger

circle of people who they interact with in their social milieu. Similarly, Haslam, Knippenberg, Platow and Ellemer (2003) argue that individuals do not perceive their identity in isolation; they view and interpret their identity in relation to the social situations in which they develop. In other words, the way people come to define who or what they are in these situations is largely determined by the group to which they belong. As Tajfel (1982) and Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell (1987) argue, the perception that one belongs to a particular group has an impact on the kind of behaviour that one exhibits.

Quite recently, in Israel, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) conducted a study where she related school dropout to cultural traditions among the Bedouin Arabs of the Negev area. I am drawn to Abu-Rabia-Queder's study because of the traditional aspect which though not identical to the Zambian context where I conducted my study, seems to provide an appropriate context to conceptualise the cultural aspects of my study. Abu-Rabia-Queder used ethnographic interviews to explore school dropout among Bedouin females of the Negev area in Israel. To capture an all rounded data set, she interviewed girls who were still in school, girls who had dropped out, as well as their mothers, and fathers. All together, Abu-Rabia-Queder had a sample of fifty research participants.

Applying the traditional perspective to the study of school dropout is critical as Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006) argues because it taps into ecological aspects of society which are often ignored by some providers of modern education. She argues that for any measures trying to remedy educational problems, specifically, problems to do with girls' and women's schooling to be successful, they need to take into consideration cultural practices. The second aspect that draws me to Abu-Rabia-Queder's study is her use of the qualitative methodology. Through using qualitative interviews, Abu-Rabia-Queder seems to have been able to capture a broader and deeper understanding of how the patriarchal Bedouin traditions impacted negatively the schooling of women and girls. Like the Bedouin culture, the Zambian culture, specifically the Tonga culture where I conducted this study, is dominated by patriarchal traditions that view the roles of women as revolving around marriage and motherhood.

The general finding from Abu-Rabia-Queder's (2006) study was that girls in the Bedouin society mainly dropped out of school due to clashes between the traditions of the Bedouin culture and modernity. Specifically, girls withdrew or were withdrawn from school for fear that they might lose their honour. By 'losing honour', the respondents in Abu-Rabia-Queder's study meant that girls might get involved in sexual activities with boys and bring disgrace to their families. Due to this value placed on preserving girls' honour, parents, especially the less educated ones, would not let their daughters attend co-education schools.

Abu-Rabia-Queder's (2006) study also uncovered the domineering position of fathers in the Bedouin culture. She observes that fathers both among the educated and the less educated people had the full authority to let their daughters continue with school or pull them out. The exercising of this "inalienable right" by Bedouin fathers was, however, more enforced among the less educated. It was not uncommon, for instance, for girls who were viewed as being in danger of losing their honour to be pulled out of school and forced into early marriage by their fathers. This aspect of Abu-Rabia-Queder's findings will become critical when I discuss the findings on how school dropout was influenced by societal cultural practices in my study.

In a more recent study, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) examined how Bedouin women resisted the demands of patriarchy. She used semi-structured ethnographic interviews to capture the participants' perspectives on various aspects of patriarchy. In this study, Abu-Rabia-Queder had several categories of research participants as follows: grandparents; mothers of dropouts; mothers of schoolgirls; fathers; girls who had dropped out of school; and girls who were still in school. The total sample for her study was seventy-two participants.

The findings from the Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) study indicate that even if grandmothers were not opposed to girls' education, they were not for the idea of girls learning together with boys. As she had found in the 2006 study, the reasons for the reservation were that girls would lose their honour if they were allowed to mix with boys. Here too Abu-Rabia-Queder reports that women were helpless as fathers had the full authority to decide their daughters' fate (whether to let them continue with school

or force them to drop out). Consequently, feelings of helplessness were manifested by the girls who Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) interviewed. These girls expressed some dislike of the dictates of the patriarchal traditions of their culture, however, they would not dare complain openly. To this effect, Abu-Rabia-Queder argues:

...all members of this collective society, especially girls and women, are expected to express the same ideas in order to demonstrate their solidarity and identification with the collective. Thinking differently from their parents, especially from their unsupportive fathers, endangers these girls, which is why they cannot confront their fathers directly but rather resist implicitly and in private (2007, pp. 179-180).

Looking at the subtle resistance to patriarchy that Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) found among the Bedouin women, one wonders how deep the conformity to the collective goes even in the so-called collectivistic cultures. Accordingly, a question follows: Do individuals in collectivistic cultures truly conform to the mentality of their cultures or do they merely exhibit helpless social conformity to the group?

The cultural landscape that Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, 2007) depicts about the Bedouin Arabs in Israel seems to be reminiscent of some African cultures. African cultures, as Lemrini (2000) argues, tend to socialise girls and women in ways whereby they are stereotypically groomed to serve men as wives and mothers. Among the Tswana people of Botswana, for instance, boys are viewed as the embodiment of authority in the tribe. The continuity of the family lineage and that of the entire tribe rests on the boy child. On the other hand, the girl child is expected to serve as a wife and mother, and fulfil other domestic chores (Egbo, 2000; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999).

In order to inculcate the requirements of patriarchy in the minds of the young people, a number of African cultures hold initiation rites. Van Gennep (1960) defines initiation rites as rites of passage to mark a young person's movement from childhood into adulthood. As Brown (1963, 1970) argues, these puberty rites confer on the young person being initiated, a new identity along with a new set of social responsibilities.

Among the Tsonga tribe of South Africa, for instance, the 'Musevhetho' initiation ceremony is performed to mark a girl's entry into puberty. As Milubi (2000) explains, this ceremony involves the elongation of the girl's labia minora to prepare her for providing sexual gratification to her future husband. Similar ceremonies as Milubi further explains are performed among the Venda, another South African tribal grouping.

In Zambia, the country where I conducted this study, initiation rites also occupy an integral part in the transmission of patriarchal values to young women who come of age. Different tribes hold different types of initiation rites in Zambia. However, the goal seems to be universal; to prepare the young women for their marriage and motherhood roles (see Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001). Richards's (1956) book gives a detailed account of the female initiation rites among the Bemba speaking people of northern Zambia. The title of Richards's book, "Chisungu" is in fact, the name of the Bemba female initiation rite. Richards's account of initiation rites in this book, as far as my search for literature on initiation rites revealed, seems to be one of the most elaborate accounts of what is done during these rites. Richards emphasises in her accounts that the main goal in these ceremonies is to prepare girls for roles in their patriarchal societies. She for instance, reports a response that she got from one of her male research participants as regards the importance of the Chisungu initiation rite:

No one would want to marry a girl who had not had her Chisungu danced. She would not know what her fellow women knew. She would not be invited to the Chisungu feasts. She would just be a piece of rubbish, an uncultivated weed, an unfired pot, a fool and simply no woman (Richards, 1956, p. 120).

Such is the value patriarchal societies in Zambia place on these female initiation rites as avenues for passing patriarchal teachings from generation to generation.

Several years later, Rasing (2001) carried out similar studies in the areas where Richards (1956) had conducted her observation of initiation rites among the Bemba speaking people in 1930. More than six decades later, Rasing (2001) confirmed the findings of Richards (1956) that female initiation rites were centred on preparing young people for their marriage and motherhood roles.

As the literature has indicated, female initiation rites in Zambia are viewed as a means for conferring additional value on the young women so that they can become “marriageable”. Most girls in Zambia are initiated while they are still in school. In view of the emphasis that is placed on teaching young women their marriage and motherhood roles, one cannot help but wonder how the two scenarios (teaching about marriage and formal schooling) affect each other. Consequently, one of the questions that I ask in this study is how societal cultural practices influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling.

In other parts of Africa, mostly in West Africa, North Africa, countries around the horn of Africa, and some parts of East Africa, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), another form of female initiation is performed (World Health Organization, 1997). The World Health Organization puts the number of girls and women who have been genitally mutilated worldwide at about 130 million. Further, the World Health Organization observes that nearly two million girls and women, mostly in the practicing regions of Africa, risk being mutilated annually. Female Genital Mutilation like other forms of female initiation serves patriarchy and seems to be one way the marginalization of girls and women has been perpetuated from one generation to another. In relation to this argument, Alexander et al. (1997, p. 98) point out,

Race, gender, and social class locate individuals and families in society’s stratification system, and the conditions surrounding these statuses and roles help determine how the slate is filled in. They begin to shape children’s academic prospects long before school enters the picture, and they continue to weigh on children’s development throughout their schooling

The above quotation from Alexander et al. (1997) seems to suggest that the cultural organization of a people determines the boundaries that individuals in that culture set for themselves. In other words, in that sense, culture becomes the road map that determines not only the direction people must go, but how far they should travel as well.

The literature which I have presented in this section has demonstrated the important role that culture plays in the identity construction of a people. Through culture, people come to define who they are and what they should or should not do in life. The

literature has also shown how some cultural practices in patriarchal societies tend to disadvantage girls and women in the pursuit of formal education. In the next section, I turn to reviewing studies that have linked school dropout to family and community aspects.

2.4 Family, community and school dropout

In this section, I review literature from studies that have linked school dropout to family and community aspects. These aspects include SES; family composition (big or small, mother-father headed or single parent headed); parents' level of education; peer networks; employment position of parents; involvement of parents in the education of their children; neighbourhood quality.

Coleman (1987) did an analysis of how the lack of atmospheres supportive of schooling in families and communities tended to contribute to students' inadequate performance in school. To this end, Coleman related school dropout to "social capital". He defines social capital as the help or guidance that adult members of society give to children to help them make appropriate choices as they pursue their school careers. According to Coleman, social capital exists both at family and community level. In his analysis, Coleman attributes school dropout to the decline in the social capital both at family and community level. He argues that due to the economic stress that families go through, parents spend most of their time trying to make ends meet; they do not spend enough quality time on educational matters with their children. Paradoxically, Coleman also argues that as people get more educated, they seem to get too engrossed in their careers to worry about giving educational guidance to their children. This, he argues, tends to put children at risk of dropping out of school. What Coleman seems to be saying in his study is that the way adults in families and communities respond to the educational needs of children is critical in determining whether children drop out of school or stay until completion.

Inevitably, children meet a number of challenges during their pursuit of education. Ordinarily, these challenges would easily push them out of the education system, however, where there is social capital, as Coleman (1987) has explained, these

challenges can easily be overcome or at least alleviated. In this respect, I would liken social capital to the scaffolding that builders use at construction sites. Without the scaffolding, builders would not be able to reach the top parts of high buildings, in fact, without scaffolding any construction venture would largely be futile. Similarly, schooling is comparable to constructing a high building where students need scaffolding (social capital) to be able to reach the top part of the building (graduation). The presence of social capital in families and communities therefore is an important support system without which children would find it difficult to succeed in their school careers.

In a study related to social capital, Crane (1991) examined the impact of neighbourhoods with social problems on school dropout and adolescent childbearing in the United States. Crane drew the two samples that he used for his study from the 1970 Public Use Microdata Samples. As Crane explains, this data set was collected by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau for the 1970 census. He sampled 92,512 adolescents for the school dropout part of his study, while 44,466 female adolescents were sampled for the childbearing part. In this study, Crane hypothesised, "...ghettos are neighbourhoods that have experienced epidemics of social problems" (1991, p. 1227).

The findings largely confirmed Crane's (1991) hypothesis among African and White American respondents for both school dropout and childbearing. Specifically, he found that school dropout tended to be higher in those neighbourhoods that had outbreaks of social problems. Similarly, teen childbearing was found to be higher in those neighbourhoods with social problems and was positively related to school dropout. Owing to these findings, Crane made the following recommendation:

Neighbourhood improvement strategies might be very effective in reducing dropout and teen childbearing rates in ghettos and perhaps in bad neighbourhoods outside of large cities (1991, p. 252).

Looking at this and other research evidence that has indicated a close link between neighbourhood and school dropout, one of the questions that I ask in my study focuses on finding out how communities influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling.

In one of the earlier studies on school dropout in the United States, Rumberger (1983) investigated the influences of race, sex, and family background on school dropout. He drew his sample of young people who were aged between fourteen and twenty one in 1979 from the National Longitudinal Survey. Among other things, Rumberger found family background to be a strong indicator of school dropout. Specifically, students from poor SES families were found to be at higher risk of dropping out than their counterparts from financially sound family backgrounds.

In explaining his findings, Rumberger (1983) proposes that better educated parents may have a positive influence on the education of their children because they act as role models. In addition, he argues that parents with higher levels of education may spend more time with their children, giving a positive influence on their academic performance. This argument that Rumberger makes, however, seems to run counter to the findings of Coleman (1987) who argues that increases in educational attainment among parents tend to erode social capital which is a vital element in the reduction of school dropout. Coleman contends that as parents get more and more educated, they tend to get more engrossed in the pursuit of their careers so that they pay less attention to the educational requirements of their children. Looking at the contradiction in the findings of Coleman (1987) and Rumberger (1983), it seems to me that what matters is not whether or not parents are highly educated, what matters seems to be whether or not parents provide the required social capital to their children. In other words, illiterate parents can encourage their children in their school career as much as educated ones can, as long as they provide the required support and guidance.

Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter and Dornbusch (1990) examined school dropout from the family perspective as part of an on-going study of families and schools which was being conducted in six high schools of the San Francisco Bay-area in the United States. Specifically, Rumberger et al. investigated the influence of parenting styles on school dropout. Their study yielded support for the influence of parenting style on school dropout. Firstly, they found that most dropouts came out of families which practised permissive parenting styles. This particular finding is interesting in light of what Coleman (1987) found in his analysis namely that the erosion of social capital was responsible for school dropout. It seems likely that children from families

that practised permissive parenting styles tended to drop out more due to the laissez-faire attitude of their parents. This might have meant that the scaffolding (social capital) needed to support the children in their schooling was unavailable. The other finding that came from the Rumberger et al. (1990) study was that parents of dropouts tended to react negatively to the poor academic performance of their children than did the parents of non-dropouts. Finally, Rumberger and his colleagues report that parents of dropouts tended not to be actively involved in the education of their children. Because parents did not push their children, the latter tended to pay less attention to doing their homework, and became more irregular in their school attendance. As the researchers argue, these tendencies inevitably led to poor academic performance and school dropout later on.

Also investigating the link between family set up and school dropout, Astone and McLanahan (1991) examined the relationship between the structure of a family and school dropout using data from an on-going project called “High School and Beyond” in the United States. The researchers used a sample of students who were in the second year cohort in 1986. For this study, the researchers were interested in two sets of variables. Firstly, the dependent variables which measured aspects of success in secondary school included the following variables: educational dreams; performance levels; school attendance; attitude toward school; positive or negative feelings about school; and whether or not the young person had completed school. The family structure aspect of the study comprised the following independent variables: participants raised by both biological parents; participants raised by a single biological parent; participants raised by a biological parent and a stepparent; and participants without both their parents.

Some noteworthy findings emerged out of this study. Firstly, Astone and McLanahan (1991) found that children who did not live with their biological parents received less educational encouragement than their counterparts who lived with their biological parents. Astone and McLanahan also report that children from broken families received less help and guidance in their school work. Probably, because of lack of social capital identified earlier by Coleman (1987), Astone and McLanahan (1991)

found that children from single-parent homes and stepparent families were more prone to disengaging themselves from school and eventual school dropout.

Peer networks are an important aspect of community especially in the lives of adolescents. For this reason, some studies (e.g. Parker & Asher, 1987; Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice & Tremblay, 1997) have focused on examining the influence of peer networks on school dropout.

From a sample of 191 (109 males and 82 females) high school students in a suburb of Montreal in Canada, Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) conducted a study to compare friendship patterns between students who were at risk of dropping out and those who were not at risk. The researchers created instruments to measure the young people's friendship networks at school, within the neighbourhoods where they lived, and in other places outside school and neighbourhoods. With regard to the friendship networks in places other than schools or neighbourhoods, the researchers asked the participants to indicate the places where they met those peers. Finally, Ellenbogen and Chamberland asked their research participants whether their friends were in full-time or part-time gainful employment.

Significant findings indicating that peer networks have some influence on school dropout emerged from this study. Firstly, Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) report that at risk students tended to increasingly have friends who were dropouts. In addition, students who were at risk of prematurely leaving school were found to have more close friends who had graduated. Thirdly, at risk students had more friends in full-time gainful employment. One common thread seems to run through all these three findings, namely that those students who were on the trajectory of dropping out of school tended to identify themselves more with peers outside of the school environment.

Further, Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) report that youth who were at risk of dropping out were more likely to be rejected by their classmates. Consequently, the researchers argued, "...development of an out of school friendship network may become a salient factor in the disengagement process during adolescence"

(Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997, p. 363). Thus, the action that the students who were rejected by their peers took to detach themselves from the school environment, likely had to do with a feeling of lack of fulfilment within the school environment. In that sense, prospects outside the school environment might have appeared to be more attractive.

Also in Montreal, Janosz et al. (1997) examined factors which predicted school dropout and how these factors played themselves out over a period of time. In this study, Janosz and his colleagues used two longitudinal samples comprising White French-speaking boys and girls aged between twelve and sixteen from the Montreal area. The first sample was collected in 1974 and comprised 791 young people. The second sample was collected in 1985 and also had 791 boys and girls. For both the samples, a self-administered Social and Personal Inventory on the young people's psychosocial adjustment was used to collect the data.

A number of valuable results with regard to how peer networks impacted schooling came out of this study. Firstly, Janosz et al. (1997) report that future dropouts tended to like loitering around with their friends during school time. The researchers also report that future dropouts had friendship circles which did not show much interest in school; they engaged in a number of deviant behavioural patterns. While these school dropout predictors were found, Janosz et al. admit that their study offers no conclusive evidence on the stability of the processes as they did not include in the research issues of developmental and temporal relationships between different school dropout predictors. Even so, it seems these findings indicate that peer networks within school environments and outside, have an influence on the decisions that young people make about schooling.

Parker and Asher (1987) also provided support for the link between peer networks and school dropout. The researchers reviewed a number of studies to establish the authenticity of the claim that problems in peer groups in childhood are good predictors of maladjustment in later life. The researchers, like Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997), found that young people who were unaccepted by peers in the school environment tended to be more prone to drop out of school. Parker and Asher

(1987) argue that peer networks are an important source of academic support for students. They indicate that through peer groups, students are able to come together and tackle complicated educational challenges which they would not otherwise be able to on their own. Students who are rejected by their peers, Parker and Asher argue, tend to perform poorly academically because they do not benefit from these peer academic support groups. Due to the rejection that unpopular adolescents experience in school, the prospect of going to school is not one they look forward to. This invariably leads them to drop out of school. Parker and Asher's argument seems to be in congruence with an observation made by Alexander et al. that, "dropout...is a means of escape from an environment that is psychologically punishing" (2001, p. 763).

The literature in this section has shown that conditions obtaining in families and communities have a critical influence on whether students will stay in school until graduation or leave prematurely. The literature suggests that family and community conditions that are supportive of schooling encourage students to stay in school until graduation, while unfavourable conditions tend to lead to school dropout. In the next section, I make a summary of the poignant aspects that have emerged from this chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature has shown how the social milieu that one is brought up in influences one's pursuit of education. Firstly, the literature has demonstrated that school dropout is a developmental problem which can be linked to a multiplicity of factors beginning in early childhood. Secondly, the literature has suggested that culture as an agent of identity formation for any people, plays a critical role in setting the boundaries that people observe in the goals they set for themselves, including the pursuit of formal education. Specifically, the literature has suggested that patriarchal cultures which view the roles of women as revolving around marriage and motherhood tend to have a negative impact on girls' and women's pursuit of formal schooling.

Thus, through the review of literature in this chapter, one can see that school dropout is not a straightforward problem that can be understood through simplistic cause and effect explanations, it is complex. This provides further support for the argument that I am making in this dissertation namely that school dropout factors are inextricably interwoven. In line with this holistic conceptualization of school dropout, I in the next section review studies which have examined school dropout by linking it to conditions obtaining in the school environment.

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CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOOL DROPOUT

3.1 Introduction

Broadly speaking, there are two environments that are vital in the educational career of a child. These are the home environment and the school environment. The home environment, as I have demonstrated in the preceding chapter, is important because it provides the supportive social capital that the child needs to be able to pursue his/her educational career. The school environment, on the other hand, is critical in that it is, so to speak, the arena where the teaching-learning processes “formally” take place through the interactions that the child engages in with the teaching staff and other students (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Thus, if utilised properly, the two environments can complement each other in ensuring that students have a successful educational career.

In this chapter, my focus is on showing how school dropout may be linked to conditions obtaining in the school environment. I have divided the chapter into two sections. In the first section, I review studies that have related school dropout to school characteristics. In the second section, I focus on studies that have linked school dropout to students’ level of involvement in school activities in the classroom and/or outside. I should, however, mention that I have based the categorization of these studies on their main thrust (i.e. what they set out to investigate) as opposed to the findings yielded. Thus, while I separate the studies in these two categories, they share a number of common findings between them. In addition, some of the findings from both categories of studies relate to issues that are outside the school environment domain. This commonality and diversity in the findings seems to further indicate that school dropout factors are interwoven.

3.2 School characteristics and school dropout

In the recent past, there has been a realization by scholars (e.g. Lee & Burkam, 2003; Smyth & Hattam, 2002) that the role that schools play in contributing to school dropout is critical, but underestimated or ignored altogether in some cases. These studies have indicated that school dropout is as much attributable to school environments as it is to families and communities where students who drop out come from.

Recently, Christle, Jolivette and Nelson (2007) combined quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate school characteristics related to high school dropout rates in 196 schools in the Kentucky area in the United States. Christle and her colleagues indicate that school dropout rates varied depending on specific school characteristics. Firstly, they demonstrate that school dropout is related to schools' passing rates and the extent to which schools allowed students to progress to another grade or repeat a particular grade. Schools with higher passing rates were found to have lower school dropout rates compared to schools with lower passing rates. Similarly, students who repeated a grade were found to be more likely to drop out compared to their counterparts who progressed through the grades without repeating. In addition, the researchers found that students, who were attached to school and felt at home in the school environment, were less likely to drop out.

Another useful finding in the Christle et al. (2007) study was the tendency for the school dropout rate to be high in schools which had a high number of students with problem behaviours. In those schools, the researchers found teachers to use suspension as a disciplining measure more. This tended to impact negatively on students' schooling. Christle and her colleagues also indicate that there was a positive correlation between SES and school dropout, with students coming from low SES backgrounds being more likely to drop out than their counterparts from high SES backgrounds.

With regard to the differences between teachers who taught in schools with a high school dropout rate and those who taught in schools with a low school dropout rate,

Christle et al. (2007) found a disparity in terms of teachers' years of experience. They found that teachers who taught in schools with a low school dropout rate had twice as many years of experience as their colleagues who taught in high dropout schools. It is not clear from the Christle et al. study why experienced teachers were mostly found in schools with a low school dropout rate, however, I have my assumptions. Firstly, schools with a high dropout rate might have had poor remuneration packages which might have only been attractive to inexperienced teachers who might have been looking for some work experience. Another possibility is that schools with low school dropout rates might have had better facilities which might have attracted teachers with experience; this may not have been the case with schools that had high dropout rates. The other possible explanation is that schools with high school dropout rates might have been attended by minority students who came from impoverished backgrounds. This might explain why the researchers found that compared to White students, more Black and Hispanic students attended schools where school dropout rates were high. Christle et al. also report that in schools with high school dropout rates, the collaboration between school personnel and families of students was poor compared to those schools which had a low school dropout rate.

These findings from the Christle et al. (2007) study seem to further suggest that school factors that relate to school dropout are difficult to isolate; they seem to be intermingled with several other factors from families and communities of students. For instance, some schools had a high dropout rate because they predominantly admitted students who came from disadvantaged backgrounds, which put them at risk of dropping out. In such a case, it becomes difficult to draw the line regarding whether such students dropped out of school due to the poor school environment or due to the propensity to drop out that those students came with from their disadvantaged backgrounds. The opposite could also happen where students who are not at risk of dropping out attend schools which have characteristics that do not support the retention of students. In those cases, schools would probably bear the blame, however, even there the situation may not be a clear cut one. The conclusion to be drawn from this seems to be that factors influencing school dropout are interrelated and cannot be neatly localised to one specific area.

Patterson, Hale and Stessman (2007/2008) sought to have an in-depth understanding of how the school environment contributed to school dropout by using qualitative research methods. They used personal interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis as data collection techniques to investigate how school culture and school structure contributed to high school dropout among low-income and Latino students at a school that was identified as having a high school dropout rate in the United States. A total of 68 subjects comprising; high school students, parents/family members, and educational personnel participated in this study.

What seems particularly significant about the Patterson et al. (2007/2008) study is the sample that the researchers used. They used a range of research participants comprising: high school students; educational personnel; and parents. In other words, Patterson et al. included in their study; school aspects, family aspects, and aspects relating to individual students, which does not seem to have been done in the majority of studies conducted on school dropout. The use of this diversified sample seemed to provide the researchers with an opportunity to better understand the multiplicity and interconnected nature of school dropout factors.

A number of noteworthy findings came out of the Patterson et al (2007/2008) study. Firstly, the researchers found that school personnel contributed to school dropout by stereotyping minority students and students from poor SES backgrounds. Secondly, students the researchers interviewed indicated that they lacked individualised help from teachers on areas where they needed further explanation. On the part of the teachers, Patterson and his colleagues report that teachers often found themselves with too many things to attend to so that even if they wanted to attend to the individual needs of students, they would practically not be able to. Teachers were also found to have had classes that were too big to allow them to attend to individual needs of students. One of the teachers who the researchers interviewed observed:

Having 43 freshmen in one class... that is not a good beginning experience for kids to have that many in a class (Patterson et al., 2007/2008, p. 11).

Another teacher interviewed in the same study described the consequences of large class sizes:

I had one class of 37 and one class of 33. I would get done with the lesson and you know, 20 hands would go up for help and I could only get to about 10 of them (p. 11).

One consequence of large numbers of students in a class which teachers allude to in the above excerpts from the Patterson et al. (2007/2008) study was their inability to establish a personal, one-to-one contact with students. Indeed one of the complaints that students who were interviewed in the same study raised was that teachers spent most of the time putting notes on the board at the expense of explaining lessons to students. Most students in the Patterson et al. study, found the use of teaching methods that did not involve one-to-one interaction with teachers to alienate students from the school environment.

In Australia, also using qualitative research methods, Smyth and Hattam (2002) investigated how early school leaving might be influenced by the culture obtaining in a school. By “school culture” the researchers referred to the school ethos guiding the interaction between teachers and students both in the classroom and outside. The researchers interviewed 209 young Australians who had dropped out or were identified as being on the verge of dropping out. Following the interpretation of the findings, Smyth and Hattam came up with three school culture types that epitomised the different cultures that the young people experienced in school. These school cultures were: aggressive school culture; passive school culture; and active school culture. These three school culture types that Smyth and Hattam developed provide an important framework for understanding school dropout in relation to school environment.

Smyth and Hattam (2002) found an aggressive school culture to be one where students who came into contact with the law in one way or another, were intolerably ejected out of school using “strong discipline policies”, to use the exact phrase used by the researchers. Mostly students who came from poor SES backgrounds were found to bear the brunt of the strong discipline policies found in schools with

aggressive school cultures. Smyth and Hattam drew the following conclusion about the aggressive school culture:

This kind of school culture did not have caring ways of dealing with students who 'speak back', and teaching approaches often appeared to embody childlike approaches, enacted by teachers who appeared condescending, overreacting, and even paranoid. Issues of harassment, sexism, racism and classism were rampant, treated with indifference and considered as not being the rightful domain of the school (2002, p. 383).

In a passive school culture environment, on the other hand, Smyth and Hattam (2002) found that teaching methods, school curricula, testing and evaluation procedures were unstimulating to the students. In this environment, most young people felt that the school did not demonstrate any care about their academic and non-academic welfare. In my view, as far as attending to problems of students was concerned, it appears the aggressive and passive school cultures were similar; in both environments, nothing was done about students' challenges. The only difference probably was that in an aggressive school culture, dropout was instant, while in a passive school culture it was more gradual and insidious.

With regard to the active school culture, Smyth and Hattam (2002) found that the interests of students were treated with utmost diligence. The researchers observe the following about the active school culture:

An active school culture presents itself as stepping out and working reciprocally with students to create an environment in which, regardless of the background, all students have the opportunity to succeed. Student voice is the pre-eminent theme within this culture which is used to construct curriculum and pedagogy around the lives and experiences students bring to the school (Smyth & Hattam, 2002, p. 384).

Smyth and Hattam's (2002) findings have underscored the important role that the school environment plays in prematurely ejecting students out of school or retaining them until graduation. In recognition of this critical role that schools play in determining whether students graduated or dropped out, one of the research questions that I ask in my study seeks to find out how the school environment influences the choices that adolescents make about schooling.

Similar to the approach taken by Smyth and Hattam (2002) in Australia, Lee and Burkam (2003), in the United States, examined the roles that school environments might play in determining whether students left school along the way or stayed until graduation. Specifically, the researchers wanted to find out the impact of school organization on school dropout. Thus, they looked at structure, in particular, school size and the school sector (whether the school was government or privately controlled). The researchers also related the type of school curricula offered in a school to school dropout. Lee and Burkam (2003) drew a sample of 190 schools comprising 3,840 participants from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. The researchers used multilevel quantitative methods to examine the influence of schools on school dropout.

The findings of the Lee and Burkam (2003) study indicate that school organization had an influence on students' decision to drop out or stay on. Firstly, the researchers found that dropout rates were lower in private schools than they were in government schools. Secondly, Lee and Burkam found school curricula followed in schools to influence school dropout. Regarding school size, the researchers report that school size per se did not have a direct impact on school dropout, except in so far as other organizational features of the school were concerned. By organizational features, the researchers were referring to how schools organised students for instruction and other school activities requiring student-teacher interaction. Finally, Lee and Burkam report that students were less likely to drop out where the relationship between teachers and students was warm.

In this section, the literature has indicated how internal characteristics of a school can have an influence on school dropout. The literature suggests that schools which create a warm atmosphere where students feel valued and cared for tend to have a lower school dropout rate compared to schools with uncaring environments. However, what the literature also seems to have suggested is that it is difficult to isolate school dropout aspects that are purely related to school characteristics. It is difficult to determine where to draw the line between the influence coming from school characteristics and the influence coming from individual and/or family/community

aspects. In the next section, I turn to studies that have related school dropout to students' engagement in a school environment.

3.3 Student engagement and school dropout

Engagement as it has been used in school dropout literature signifies the extent to which students get involved in the activities taking place within the school environment. Among the literature that has been cited on the subject of engagement in relation to school dropout, probably none has had as much impact as Finn's (1989) explanation of school dropout using two models. Finn defines school dropout as, "...a process of disengagement overtime, and not a phenomenon that occurs in a single day or even a single school year" (1989, p. 133). Finn used two models; the participation-identification model, and frustration-self esteem model to examine how school dropout might be explained as a gradual process influenced by factors emanating from a student's early school experiences. What seems especially useful about these two models is that they encapsulate the school dropout problem by relating it to classroom activities and to those activities done outside classroom.

According to the frustration-self esteem model, as Finn (1989) provided, students drop out of school due to poor academic performance which schools fail to remedy. The lack of help from the school system on the academic challenges leads to frustration and lowered self-esteem on the part of the student. At the peak of the frustration, what follows is disruptive behaviour where the frustrated student "revolts" against the school. Often as Finn further argues, the tendency is for the young people who get frustrated with the school to shift their attention from school to peer networks to mitigate and offset the feelings of embarrassment and frustration that they suffer in the classroom. Finn suggests that frustration and lowered self-esteem of students can be remedied through changing school organization. He argues that school organization that allows more close interaction between students and teachers could restore students' lost sense of self worth. Other researchers (e.g. Janosz et al., 1997; Patterson et al., 2007/2008) have made similar suggestions.

In the other model, the participation-identification model, Finn (1989) argues that where students see themselves as part and parcel of the classroom and the general school environment, they participate actively in the activities thereof. Thus, Finn argues for a connection between the student's feeling of belonging to a school and such behaviours as absenteeism, truancy, dropout, and delinquency. Accordingly, Finn (1989) observes that students who feel a sense of belonging in a school seem to have a smaller chance of playing truant, engaging in delinquent behaviour, and seem more likely to participate in classroom activities.

In addition, Finn (1989) argues that dropping out involves more than the physical aspect (leaving the school or dropping out); it also involves emotional and psychological disengagement. This finding by Finn seems to suggest that physical withdrawal from school may simply be the final stage preceded by the more subtle emotional and psychological withdrawal. In other words, school dropout seems to happen at two levels; the psychological level and physical level. Thus, within a school set up, it is important that teachers, school counsellors, and other school personnel involved in seeing to the well-being of students, be on the lookout for signs of psychological withdrawal from school by would be dropouts. Since school dropout is a complex problem that encompasses even the family and community environment, parents and other adults outside the school environment also need to be alert for these signs of psychological withdrawal from school by children. Such a proactive involvement by families and the community would constitute a rich resource of social capital which Coleman (1987) argues does help curb school dropout.

Johnson, Crosnoe and Elder (2001) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to study school dropout among adolescents who were in grades seven through twelve in 1994. A total sample of 8,104 students comprising White Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans was selected from 64 targeted schools. The focus of the research was on the role of race and ethnicity in students' attachment to school environment and academic engagement. Johnson et al. point out that the level of attachment to a school largely determines whether a student stays in school or drops out. Further, the researchers argue that the people in the school, activities that are done in and outside the classroom, the involvement or lack

of it of the student, have a telling effect on whether a student will be attached to a school or not. Multilevel statistical models were used to measure attachment and engagement among the participants from the three racial groupings.

Contrary to their expectations, Johnson et al. (2001) found that students from minorities were in some cases more attached to school than their White counterparts. Specifically, Hispanics exhibited the highest levels of attachment while African and White Americans exhibited attachment at the same levels. This finding also seems to further demonstrate the complexity of the school dropout problem; that it cannot be reduced to simplistic causal relationship explanations. While definite conclusions about what makes students get attached and/or engaged in a school environment cannot be reached from these findings, it does not seem out of line to conclude that engagement and attachment in school may have to do with issues of participation and identification; frustration and self-esteem which Finn (1989) so poignantly explains in the two school dropout models.

In a study conducted in Tennessee among 1,335 African-American and White American youths in 104 urban, suburban, rural, and inner-city schools in the United States, Voelkl (1997) examined what constituted students' identification with school. Voelkl's study, in fact, was an application of Finn's (1989) participation-identification model. Voelkl (1997) conceptualised identification to signify the extent to which a student feels a sense of belonging within the school environment. She began her study with the assumption that identification with a school is likely to be enhanced where a student views school as a means for attaining a higher social stratum. The researcher conducted data analysis at two levels. Firstly, she performed different statistical tests to determine the differences in school identification between African and White Americans. Secondly, she conducted a series of regression analyses to determine the relationship between academic achievement and classroom participation for White and African Americans.

Important findings which largely supported Finn's (1989) participation-identification model came out of the Voelkl (1997) study. Firstly, at fourth grade level, identification with school revealed a weak but significant correlation with

achievement ($r = .07$). At the seventh grade level, the correlation was a little higher ($r = .10$). Weak though these correlations may be, they seem to indicate the positive relationship that exists between identification with school and academic achievement. It seems, the higher a student's level of identification with a school, the higher the academic performance of that student is likely to be.

Another significant result that Voelkl's (1997) study yielded was that students with a higher identification with the school, tended to participate more in classroom activities. These results, however, varied between African Americans and White Americans; identification levels were higher among African Americans than they were among White Americans. With regard to gender, the results showed that females had a significantly higher level of identification with school than males. Finally, Voelkl draws a conclusion as follows:

Students' disidentification from school is partly a function of the degree of academic success experienced in school and partly of the degree to which youngsters participate in classroom learning activities (1997, p. 314).

Voelkl's (1997) findings have provided an important paradigm for conceptualising school dropout from the school environment perspective. However, these findings also seem to suggest that the relationship between participation and identification is not a clear one. For instance, it is not clear whether disidentification from a school comes as a result of lack of participation in school activities or whether lack of participation in school activities comes as a result of disidentification. Notwithstanding this dilemma, however, one thing seems clear; both identification and participation are vital to enable a student get optimal benefit from the school environment.

Pittman and Haughwout (1987) examined the influence of high school size on school dropout rate. The researchers drew their sample from the High School and Beyond data set. As the researchers explain, "*High School and Beyond* is a longitudinal study of a national sample of students who were high school seniors or sophomores during spring 1980" (Pittman and Haughwout, 1987, p. 339). A sample of sophomore and senior high school students was selected from 744 public high schools. In this study,

the researchers were interested in assessing four variables; dropout rate, school climate, curriculum diversity, and school size. The researchers generated correlation coefficients to determine the relationship that existed between school size, social climate, curriculum diversity and school dropout rate. To measure the potential impact of school size, social climate, curriculum diversity on school dropout rate, Pittman and Haughwout (1987) used least square regressions.

The findings of the Pittman and Haughwout (1987) study revealed that there was a significant positive correlation (.31) between big schools and the tendency to drop out. In other words, a student was more likely to drop out of school if he/she attended a big school. How this happened is likely to be explained through issues of identification, attachment, participation and engagement which other researchers (e.g. Finn, 1989; Voelkl, 1997; Johnson et al., 2001) have demonstrated.

Creating environments of optimal student participation, engagement and therefore attachment and identification may be difficult to achieve in big schools due to overwhelming numbers of students. To this end, Pittman and Haughwout (1987) point out that while bigger schools may provide a diversity of subjects for students to choose from, this benefit is negated by the poor social climate that is created through expanding the schools. In fact, according to Pittman and Haughwout's further findings, larger benefits for schools do not come from creating diversified school curricula; rather they come from creating supportive school social climates. In view of this, the researchers conclude:

Larger student bodies appear to produce a less positive social environment, less social integration, and less identity with the school. These may translate into more premature school leavings (Pittman & Haughwout, 1987, p. 343).

In a more recent study in the United States, Suh and Satcher (2005) investigated school dropout among Korean American adolescents who were viewed to be at risk of dropping out of school. Unlike most American studies on school dropout which have tended to use quantitative longitudinal approaches, this study employed individualised qualitative interviews. The study also applied methodological triangulation by including maternal parents of the adolescents in the study. In all, ten adolescents (five males and five females), along with one of their maternal parents living in New York

City were interviewed for the study. The use of qualitative research methods in this study enabled the researchers to capture the voices of the young people who were affected by school dropout. Lee and Burkam (2003) have advocated for the use of qualitative research methods that actively involve the research participants in the study of school dropout to better understand the problem.

Following data analysis, three main themes signifying why Korean American young people dropped out of school emerged from Suh and Satcher's (2005) study. The following were the themes: "a sense of alienation; feelings of helplessness; and searching for shelter"(2005, p. 430). With regard to the sense of alienation, Suh and Satcher report that a number of adolescents stayed away from school because they felt discriminated against in the communities where they lived as well as at the schools they attended. The discrimination within the school likely led to the students not identifying themselves with the school environments, or what other researchers have called disengagement (see Johnson et al, 2001; Voelkl, 1997).

With regard to the theme of helplessness and hopelessness, Suh and Satcher (2005) report that mainly due to their deficiencies in the English Language, most Korean American students tended to perform poorly in school, which gave them feelings of helplessness. Further, adolescents in this study indicated that lack of adequate counselling services in schools exacerbated their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Suh and Satcher report that there were no adults who these Korean young people could draw counsel and guidance from for the challenges that they met in and outside school.

In relation to the theme of searching for shelter, Suh and Satcher (2005) report that a number of adolescents indicated that they stayed away from school because of having the feeling that they belonged outside of school where many disadvantaged youths like them were. Thus, as a result of alienation, coupled with poor academic performance, these young people felt frustrated.

The researchers argue:

... their behaviours of pursuing fun over schoolwork could be understood as an escape from feelings of inadequacy and frustration stemming from their inability to successfully carry out their school responsibilities (Suh & Satcher, 2005, p. 432).

Most of the adolescents interviewed in the Suh and Satcher (2005) study thus felt that they would have adjusted better to school if they had received more individualised help from teachers and school counsellors.

McDill, Natriello and Pallas (1985) summarized and evaluated a range of American education reports that advocated raising standards as a way of improving the performance of secondary schools. Following their evaluation, McDill and colleagues came up with three main recommendations. Firstly, they recommended, contrary to what school reform policies supported, that creating school curricula that were academically oriented would tend to sideline those students who were not academically gifted. Consequently, this would lead to the sidelined students falling out of the school system prematurely. Apart from that, the researchers recommended that having academic courses on the school curriculum would fail to tap into other equally important areas of students' abilities.

Thirdly, McDill et al. (1985) indicated that extra curricula activities were an integral part of the schooling process because they help alleviate stress which students sometimes go through due to unavoidable academic pressures. Thus, the researchers recommended that an increase of time dedicated towards academic tasks at the expense of extra curricula activities would tend to increase burnout among students which would lead to dropout. In addition to relaxing the minds of students, McDill and his colleagues argue that extra curricula activities play a vital role in establishing an atmosphere where students feel a sense of belonging in the school environment. This was found to be so especially for those students who do not do well in academic activities; extra curricula activities provide them with a feeling of self worth in the school. As a result, the researchers argue that extra curricula activities provide schools with the capacity to retain students who would otherwise prematurely fall out of the school system.

In terms of raising academic standards, McDill et al. (1985) made a similar observation as they did with regard to creating academic curricula, namely that the move would tend to exclude disadvantaged students, unless schools provided substantial extra help. Further, the researchers argue that some students may not see any relevance in highly academic school curricula in relation to the careers that they may envisage for themselves.

In the Netherlands, Dekkers and Claassen (2001) took a rarely applied view of studying school dropout. They examined the perspective of the young people who had left school (were they happy or were they not happy). Dekkers and Claassen also wanted to find out how these young people viewed schooling (was it important to them or was it not). The use of in-depth qualitative interviews with the 39 dropouts interviewed, yielded a wealth of vital findings. The researchers divided the findings in two categories. Firstly, they reported results from the dropouts who were interviewed in 1994 and 1995. Secondly, they reported the findings of the 1997 interviews.

Arising from the 1994 and 1995 interviews, Dekkers and Claassen (2001) found push factors and pull factors to have been responsible for early school leaving of a number of young people. Among the push factors, the following: problem behaviours; motivational problems; and poor academic performance were cited. The desire to find a job and earn some money was the major pull factor that attracted the young people away from school. Prior to dropping out, Dekkers and Claassen report that future dropouts began by exhibiting erratic patterns in their school attendance. Further, students on the trajectory of dropping out were found not to concentrate during lessons and were not keen on doing their homework. These findings seem to support what other studies conducted in the United States indicated namely that dropping out of school is a slow, gradual process of disengagement (see Voelkl, 1997; Johnson et al., 2001; Finn, 1989).

Further, Dekkers and Claassen (2001) found, much to their surprise that some school dropouts they interviewed did not indicate experiencing problems while at school and were satisfied with their situation. A number of these Dutch young people were in gainful employment and/or were attending a vocational course. In addition, the

researchers report that only those school dropouts who left school as a result of push factors such as deviant behaviour, lack of motivation, indicated that they regretted leaving school. Those young people who left school due to pull factors did not show any regret that they had left school. It is thus possible that the latter group of these Dutch youths may have seen school not to have much relevance to their life in the world of work which school was meant to prepare them for. Voelkl (1997) yielded similar findings in her study of school identification among White and African American students.

In the second component of the research which comprised an analysis of the interviews that were conducted in 1997, Dekkers and Claassen (2001) came up with a five item typology to categorise various types of early school leavers. This typology included the following items: “successful unschooled manual worker; school returner; money earner; voluntary unemployed; and enforced unemployed” (2001, p. 349).

The successful unemployed manual worker category comprised dropouts who were largely leading successful lives with a job that enabled them to lead a life led by an average person in the Netherlands. These young people were found to be satisfied with their condition and neither wanted to attend school nor do any course training. The majority of young people in this category were pulled out of school into the job market because they found subjects offered at school not to have much relevance to what they wanted to do in the world of work.

As the name suggests, school returners were those young people who had never cut their connection with school completely; they continued to attend classes and some had even gone on to obtain school certificates. Money earners like successful manual workers were found to have had jobs which, however, were on a temporal basis. The voluntary unemployed comprised females who had dropped out and had made a decision to get married and have children. Most of these young women were unemployed, but were quite satisfied with their situation. For these young Dutch women, probably marriage and raising a family were seen as lucrative pull factors.

The last category in the Dekkers and Claassen (2001) school dropout typology was that of the enforced unemployed. With no jobs from which to earn a living, this group of young people was found to largely regret having dropped out of school. Most of these young people were found to have left school due to push factors. It would appear these were the young people who might have come into contact with the law and bore the brunt of aggressive school cultures which Smyth and Hattam (2002) explained in their study among Australian young people.

The literature that I have reviewed in this section has shown how school dropout is linked to the extent to which students are involved in school activities. Specifically, the literature suggests that where students take an active role in the school activities both in the classroom and outside, they tend to identify themselves with the school and are thus less likely to drop out. On the other hand, the literature also indicates that where students do not actively participate in the school activities, they tend to disengage themselves from school and thus become more prone to drop out of school. While the literature has indicated this link between students' identification with the school environment and school dropout, it appears that issues of engagement or disengagement; attachment or detachment; identification or disidentification by students are complex; they do not seem to render themselves to simplistic cause-effect explanations. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity in the relationships between these factors, it seems clear that school dropout factors are interlinked and seem to have mutual influence on one another. In the next section, I make a conclusion of this chapter in which I have reviewed studies that have linked school dropout to the school environment.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature has shown that school dropout is influenced by the school environment. The literature has suggested that schools that create a warm, caring environment for students tend to have a higher chance of retaining students until graduation. On the other hand, schools whose environments do not care about the welfare and well-being of the students, academically or otherwise, tend to experience higher school dropout. Some studies have related school dropout to

students' sense of attachment to the school environment. These studies have indicated that where students actively participate in classroom and/or out of classroom activities, they tend to feel a sense of attachment to the school. On the other hand, where students are not actively involved in school activities, they tend to disengage themselves from the school. However, the literature also seems to suggest some complexity in the factors that influence school dropout. It seems it is difficult to determine where to draw the line between school dropout factors that pertain to the individual students' background and those factors that pertain to the characteristics of the school environment. This complexity in the connections between school dropout factors seems to further justify the need to study school dropout from a holistic perspective as opposed to studying it atomistically. In the next chapter I review studies that have been conducted on school dropout in Africa.

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CHAPTER FOUR

STUDIES DONE IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review studies that have been conducted on school dropout in Africa. Reviewing these studies separately is critical for this study in that it helps me place my study within the larger context of the field of school dropout in Africa, thereby showing the contribution that my study is making to the study of school dropout on the continent. As I have already indicated, school dropout research has mostly been conducted in the developed world, particularly in the United States of America and Canada. In these countries and a few other countries in Europe, school dropout research has been flourishing since the early 1980s. However, in Africa, school dropout research only started gaining ground in the recent past and seems to have been rather slow in its development both in terms of numbers and scope.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of studies that have been conducted on school dropout in Africa. The first category, which constitutes the majority of the studies has related school dropout to issues of adolescence pregnancy among females. In the second category, researchers have examined a broader spectrum of school dropout factors over and above pregnancy issues. Thus, I have segmented this chapter into these two areas on which the study of school dropout has focused in Africa.

4.2 School dropout and adolescent pregnancy

Most African studies on school dropout (see Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Mensch et al., 2001; Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004) have been confined to pregnancy related issues. These studies have largely conceptualised school dropout as a problem that affects female adolescents. The reason for this may be that pregnancy has been identified as one of the leading reasons why girls especially, drop out of school in Africa. There is obviously nothing wrong with deepening the understanding of school dropout in relation to pregnancy, however, the approach seems to limit the

understanding of school dropout. This is especially so in light of the many studies in the developed world (e.g. Jimerson et al., 2000; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Alexander et al., 1997; Suh & Satcher, 2005), which have demonstrated that the school dropout problem is a complex issue which cannot be attributed to a single factor. Thus, in this respect, the study of school dropout in Africa seems to still be in its infancy.

Meekers and Ahmed (1999) adopted a model of using data from nationally representative samples, the kind used by a number of American longitudinal studies. Meekers and Ahmed drew their data from the Botswana Family Health Survey to investigate the impact of schoolgirl pregnancy and whether girls who got pregnant managed to return to school. The methodology used in the study was largely quantitative, however, it also made use of a few focus group interviews. A sample of 3,336 Tswana women aged between fifteen and forty nine years who at the time or at some point were enrolled in school in Botswana, were included in the study. The questions in the study mainly focused on the following areas: the women's level of education; whether or not the women had left school due to falling pregnant; whether or not the women were able to return to school following pregnancy.

Meekers and Ahmed's (1999) study was useful in giving a broad picture of how much pregnancy impacted women's schooling in Botswana, however, it seems it was not within the scope of the study to explain why pregnancy tended to influence school dropout. Thus, to extend the knowledge in this field of school dropout research, I have in my study used a smaller qualitative sample which gave an opportunity for the voices of the young people who have dropped out of school to relate their experiences with regard to school dropout. Since school dropout is a broad problem that goes beyond the individual experiences of the young people who drop out of school, I have included teachers and parents in my sample. This holistic approach, in my view provides an opportunity to understand the school dropout problem from a broader, contextual perspective. Such a contextualised view of school dropout is vital especially in view of the findings from studies that have been conducted in the developed world which have indicated that school dropout is a complex, multifaceted problem (see chapters two and three).

Notwithstanding, Meekers and Ahmed's (1999) study is an important piece of work that has added knowledge to the understanding of school dropout in Africa. Firstly, the researchers report that pregnancy was identified as a serious problem in Botswana; it was not only prevalent in junior and senior secondary school, but it started as early as standard one. Secondly, the study indicates that the use of contraceptives was the most effective mode of curbing teenage pregnancy; adolescents who used contraceptives from the onset of their sexual activity were about fifty percent less likely to drop out as a result of pregnancy. Thirdly, Meekers and Ahmed found that the ability of adolescents who got pregnant to return to school after giving birth, alleviated the negative impact of teenage pregnancy. However, the researchers indicate that girls who got pregnant in Botswana found it difficult to return to school:

In Botswana, girls are not allowed to re-apply for admission to school until their child is one year of age, and they are not allowed to return to their former school (Meekers & Ahmed, 1999 p. 207).

In Zambia where I conducted my study, there are no restrictions in the education policy as regards when a girl who gets pregnant can return to school after giving birth. However, since no study seems to have been conducted in Zambia to ascertain how the implementation of this policy has been in schools, I cannot say with any amount of conviction that the policy has been well implemented there. The least I can do therefore is make a recommendation that research is required in this area as a matter of urgency. As Meekers and Ahmed (1999) point out, the lack of information on how adolescents who return to school fare, is a problem affecting several other countries in Africa.

In spite of the difficulties that girls in Botswana were found to face in the process of trying to get back into school following a pregnancy, Meekers and Ahmed (1999) indicate that the few who did manage to get back into the education system, managed to stay on until they received their senior secondary school certificate. This finding seems to indicate that the policy which allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school has potential to help curb the school dropout problem.

In an earlier study, Duncan (1988) conducted a survey which sought to give an indication of the problem of pregnancy among school going adolescents in Botswana. A number of findings came out of this study. Firstly, Duncan indicates that school dropout was higher in community schools than it was in government schools. Further, in both government and community schools, girls were found to drop out more than boys. Thirdly, pregnancy was found to account for about seventy five percent of all dropout cases among girls. While Duncan's study mainly focused on pregnancy related issues, she also reports that among boys, the major cause of school dropout was loss of interest in school. Due to the survey nature of the study, Duncan does not give an explanation as to why most boys left school due to loss of interest. However, considering what other studies outside Africa (e.g. Janosz et al., 1997; Dekkers & Claassen, 2001) have reported, namely that a number of students lose interest in school due to lures of better prospects outside school, it seems Duncan's (1988) finding needs follow up research to ascertain the reasons why boys lost interest in school.

In a more recent study, Grant and Hallman (2006) investigated factors related to schoolgirls falling pregnant and their ability, or lack of it, to get re-enrolled into school following pregnancy. Grant and Hallman drew their sample from the survey that was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal by Rutenberg, Kehus-Alons, Brown, Macintyre, Dallimore and Kaufman (2001) to find out the transition of young people into adulthood in the midst of the AIDS scourge. The study was conducted in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas of selected districts of KwaZulu Natal.

Grant and Hallman (2006) report a number of important findings. Firstly, they indicate that girls who were performing poorly academically were more prone to falling pregnant. Secondly, poorly performing schoolgirls who fell pregnant were more likely to drop out of school. Thirdly, those schoolgirls who had repeated a grade at some point in their school career, were twice more likely to drop out if they got pregnant than their counterparts who had not repeated any grade.

Another finding was that among those young women who dropped out of school as a result of pregnancy, those who had experienced being held back in a grade or had

experienced non-pregnancy related temporary withdrawal from school at some point, were significantly less likely to re-enter school after giving birth. Grant and Hallman (2006) also report that girls who did not have anyone to help them with the caregiving duties were more likely to drop out than their counterparts who had other people to help with caring for the baby. Further, the researchers report that young women who were deeply engaged in their schooling were less likely to drop out as a result of falling pregnant. This last finding seems to suggest that falling pregnant or deciding to fall pregnant may be linked to behavioural patterns of disengagement from school. As Grant and Hallman pointed out, studies on school dropout and disengagement in Africa are almost non-existent. In view of this, the researchers made an attempt to link pregnancy to engagement; they argue:

Students' disengagement from school has also been associated with their perception that few opportunities follow school completion. If young women believe that education offers low returns, they may feel little incentive to avoid pregnancy (Grant & Hallman, 2006, p. 16).

In this respect, pregnancy may have been viewed as something of a pull-factor (see Dekkers & Claassen, 2001; Dekkers & Driessen, 1997) in that it may have offered girls something that may have appeared more appealing than what school could offer.

Kaufman et al. (2001), focussed on issues of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and schooling in South Africa. The researchers used focus group discussions to collect data from the following categories of research participants: adolescent mothers; mothers in their twenties who had their first child in adolescence; parents of teenage mothers, and young men in their twenties. As far as addressing the general problem of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and schooling in South Africa is concerned, the focus group discussions that the researchers used to collect data seemed to enable them capture valuable findings. However, it probably would have been better if the researchers had included teachers in their sample since they were not just investigating parenthood, but schooling as well. In my view, by not including teachers in the sample, the researchers seemed to leave out an important aspect of adolescent schooling. For this reason, I have included in my sample: dropouts, parents, and teachers as my research participants. The rationale for using this holistic sample has been justified by the numerous studies cited in chapters two and three which have

shown that factors that influence school dropout emanate from a wide range of areas including families, communities, and schools.

Kaufman et al. (2001) report that in South Africa, many adolescent mothers managed to return to school after giving birth. This, however, only became possible after the introduction of a policy that allowed adolescent mothers to continue with school in 1996 by the South African government. Even so, Kaufman et al. indicate that some young women were not able to return to school following pregnancy mainly because they moved in with their partners. Once the young women moved in with their partners, they found it difficult to get re-enrolled into school due to marriage and motherhood pressures, coupled with the lack of finances.

The other reason that Kaufman et al. (2001) give for some young mothers not being able to return to school was the general perception that once a young woman had had a child, going back to school was out of the question. Such a view was understandable considering that at the time that Kaufman et al. conducted their study, the policy allowing adolescent mothers to return to school was just about four years old in South Africa. There is therefore a possibility that people were still operating from the old paradigm where girls who got pregnant were expelled from school and not allowed to re-enrol after giving birth. These findings from the Kaufman et al. study seem to indicate, as did Meekers and Ahmed (1999) that there are some challenges in the implementation of the policy which allows adolescent mothers to continue with school in Africa. In view of this, one cannot emphasise enough the need for some in-depth studies to examine how the policy which allows teenage mothers to return to school has fared.

Johnson-Hanks (2002) examined abortion among educated women in Cameroon. Even though her study was not predominantly on school dropout, it does touch a few aspects of school dropout among adolescent girls. In this study, Johnson-Hanks reports that a number of schoolgirls in Cameroon resorted to abortion to enable them continue with their schooling. The pressures associated with teen pregnancy and later motherhood, are immense and may have had an impact on the reported Cameroonian schoolgirls' resorting to abortion. However, it is also possible that resorting to

abortion might have been driven by educational policies that might not support the return of teenage mothers to school in Cameroon. Johnson-Hanks (2002) does not seem to indicate in her study what the educational policy is in Cameroon on schoolgirls who fall pregnant.

Abortion is a health hazard, especially where it is performed using unsafe means, as was the case with schoolgirls who were trying to hide the pregnancy from their parents and school authorities (Johnson-Hanks, 2002). In my view therefore, allowing girls who get pregnant to continue with school and/or return after giving birth would not only help alleviate one of the most vexing educational challenges, but would also save lots of young women's lives.

A few years following Johnson-Hanks's (2002) study, another Cameroonian researcher, Eloundou-Enyegue (2004) conducted a study on school dropout in Cameroon. Eloundou-Enyegue focused on issues of pregnancy and gender inequalities in education. In this study, the researcher's interest was in seeing how much a reduction in pregnancy related dropout would lead to the narrowing of the educational attainment gap between boys and girls. Eloundou-Enyegue drew his sample from a country wide survey on the relationship between fertility and schooling in Cameroon that had been conducted in 1999. From this data set, the researcher selected a sample of 6,686 students. In addition to the verbal responses from participants, the researcher used information on schooling histories that were stored for each of the participants.

Adolescent pregnancy is one of the leading causes of school dropout in a number of countries especially in Africa (see Duncan, 1988; Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Grant & Hallman, 2006). Thus, Eloundou-Enyegue's (2004) interest in the area is understandable. I am particularly drawn to the approach that the researcher takes of venturing to see whether solving adolescent pregnancy problems would significantly reduce gender disparities in education. This approach seems to have potential to provide an avenue to broaden the perception of school dropout beyond pregnancy related issues.

Generally, the findings from the Eloundou-Enyegue (2004) study indicated that educational disparities disadvantaging girls were mostly due to pregnancy related issues especially at secondary school level. Consequently, the researcher argues that gender disparities in the education of boys and girls in Cameroon would significantly be reduced if measures were put in place to reduce incidences of adolescent pregnancy.

While making the recommendation to devise measures to reduce teen pregnancy in order to even out educational opportunities between boys and girls, Eloundou-Enyegue (2004) also points out that without appropriate educational policies being put in place, efforts to remove gender disparities would be futile. Thus, he argues that the support of the girl-child education should begin by ensuring that there are equal enrolment opportunities starting from primary school level between boys and girls. At secondary school level where most girls enter puberty, the researcher recommends that educational policies need to ensure that they protect girls from prematurely leaving school due to pregnancy. By implication here Eloundou-Enyegue seems to be advocating an educational policy that would allow girls who got pregnant to re-enrol into school after giving birth. These recommendations that Eloundou-Enyegue makes, seem to explain the findings of the Johnson-Hanks (2002) study which earlier indicated that a number of girls in Cameroon resorted to unsafe abortions in order that they may continue with school. This seems to indicate that educational policies in Cameroon may not be so supportive of adolescent mothers going back to school after giving birth.

Eloundou-Enyegue's (2004) study has given us valuable information about how teen pregnancy, coupled with unsupportive educational policies exacerbate educational disparities between boys and girls in Cameroon. However, a number of studies (e.g. Jimerson et al., 2000; Alexander et al., 2001; Suh & Satcher, 2005; Rumberger, 1983; Dekkers & Claassen, 2001) that have been conducted in North America and Europe have demonstrated that school dropout cannot be pinned down to a single factor, nor yet to a couple of factors. School dropout is a complex problem that involves a multiplicity of factors. For this reason, in my study I have employed what I have termed a qualitative holistic approach whereby I capture dropouts', their parents', and

the teachers' perspective about school dropout. Through the triangulation of these data sources, I hope to deepen and broaden the understanding of school dropout in Africa and Zambia in particular.

Using a sample of young men and women in the age category of twelve to nineteen years drawn from a community and school survey that was conducted in three rural districts of Kenya in 1996, Mensch et al., (2001) examined the onset of premarital sex among adolescents in Kenya. The survey was divided in two parts. Part one of the survey involved household interviews with 774 adolescents and their parents. Through these interviews, the researchers collected information on: family backgrounds; educational history; pubertal experiences; sexual experiences; reproductive health knowledge; gender-role attitudes; delinquency; self-worth; and career aspirations. In part two of the survey, the researchers visited the 36 primary schools attended by the adolescents in the sample. During the visits, the researchers interviewed school administrators, and some subject teachers. In addition to the interviews, the researchers observed some lessons and various other school activities.

Unlike the findings of other studies (e.g. Duncan, 1988; Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004; Grant & Hallman, 2006) which indicate that pregnancy was the leading cause of school dropout among adolescent females, Mensch et al. (2001) indicate that pregnancy was not the major reason that adolescents cited for leaving school. Other reasons including; inability to pay school fees, deciding to leave school at the end of primary and secondary school, poor performance, lack of interest were cited by the young people. From this diversity of reasons given by adolescents as regards why they dropped out of school, one can see how focusing on pregnancy related school dropout issues can limit the understanding of school dropout.

As other studies which employed in- depth qualitative methods (e.g. Patterson et al., 2007/2008; Suh & Satcher, 2005) have indicated, school dropout factors are complex and diverse. Thus, it is still not enough to capture the various reasons that young people give for leaving school as did Mensch et al. (2001); what seems vital, in my view, is to venture into understanding what lies behind the reasons given by young people for leaving school early. If for instance, a young woman said she left school

due to early marriage, it is not enough to end at that; it is necessary to delve into asking deep questions about how and why the early marriage came to be. Similarly, if a young person says he/she left school due to losing interest in school, as Mensch et al. found among the Kenyan adolescents, it does not seem so helpful to know that fact alone; what seems more helpful is to get to the underlying reasons that triggered the loss of interest in school. Hofferth and Moore (cited in Rumberger, 1987, p. 111), support this argument and indicate, "...while many female dropouts say they leave school because they are pregnant, both getting pregnant and leaving school may be caused by a number of other, related factors".

For this reason, in this study, I venture to find out the underlying factors that lead rural adolescents to drop out of school. To enable me achieve this end, I have chosen the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method as my analytical framework. What particularly drew me to the IPA method for this study is the method's emphasis on generating meaning of phenomena through interplay of research participants' accounts and the researcher's interpretation of those accounts (see Willig, 2001; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). This approach thus provides the opportunity to generate deeper meaning about school dropout.

In 1994 as a way of trying to curb the school dropout problem in Africa, a ministerial consultative meeting on school dropout and adolescent pregnancy was held in Mauritius (Wamahiu, 1995). The meeting was organised by the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) in conjunction with the government of Mauritius to look into the plight of the girl-child in Africa vis-à-vis education. The meeting acknowledged the various forms of discrimination that girls in Africa encountered in their pursuit of formal education. Also deliberated at this meeting was the problem of adolescent pregnancy in Africa in relation to schooling. The meeting established that though pregnancy was a major contributor of school dropout among adolescent girls, the problem was exacerbated by educational policies that excluded adolescent mothers. To this effect, the meeting recommended that girls who fall pregnant while still attending school be allowed to re-enrol (Wamahiu, 1995). At this meeting as Wamahiu further observes, African countries were also challenged to conduct research to ascertain whether or not the educational policies that have been put in

place to support girl-child education were working properly. Where policies discriminated against the girl-child, it was recommended that new, more accommodating policies be enacted so as to try and maximise the chances of girls staying in school until completion.

Probably due to being one of the countries that were represented at this important ministerial consultative meeting, the policy that allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school has been in place for about a decade now in Zambia. However, as can be seen from the recent statistics (see chapter one), girls continue to have low completion rates especially in rural schools. Thus, partly, the motivation for my study has been sparked by these trends in the educational statistics.

It has been more than fourteen years since the ministerial consultative meeting in Mauritius made recommendations for more research to be conducted to better understand the school dropout problem in Africa and yet, it seems only a small number of in-depth studies has been conducted on school dropout to date. Thus, I cannot emphasise enough the need for more in-depth studies to be conducted on school dropout in Africa. I need to add, however, that there is need to broaden the study of school dropout beyond the confines of pregnancy related issues. This is more so in view of the studies conducted in the developed world which have repeatedly indicated that school dropout is influenced by many factors emanating from families and communities where students come from, and the schools that they attend (see chapters two and three).

What has emerged from the review in this section is that studies in Africa have largely focused on studying school dropout in relation to pregnancy related issues. While the findings have shown that pregnancy is a major cause of school dropout among adolescent females in Africa, the findings have also indicated that school dropout cannot be exclusively linked to pregnancy related issues. In this respect, I have recommended that more in-depth studies are required to deepen and broaden the understanding of school dropout in Africa. In the next section I turn to African studies that have taken a broader view to the study of school dropout.

4.3 Broader school dropout factors

As earlier indicated, studies that have been conducted outside Africa (e.g. Alexander et al., 1997; Suh & Satcher, 2005) have demonstrated that school dropout is a problem that is influenced by many factors. To this effect, Rumberger (1987) argues, "...factors that are associated with dropping out...can be grouped into several major categories: demographic, family- related, peer, school-related, economic, and individual" (p. 109). Thus reviewing African studies that have explored school dropout beyond pregnancy related factors is critical for this study.

Among the published African studies on school dropout that I came across in my search for literature, I consider Fobih's (1987) study conducted in eastern Ghana different from the rest. Whereas the other studies in Africa have tended to study school dropout in relation to pregnancy related issues among adolescent females, Fobih took a much broader look at the problem. What seems particularly interesting about this study is the diversity of the research participants that the researcher used and the way the selection of the participants was done. The sample for the study comprised 144 research participants broken down as follows: 44 teachers; 60 dropouts; and 40 parents. I find this diversity in the sample enriching to the study, however, what seems even more enriching is the fact that the sample is not just a collection of research subjects; it is a grouping of purposively selected participants. To start with, all the dropouts included in the sample, attended the schools at which the teachers selected taught. Secondly, the parents included in the sample were the parents of the selected dropouts. These sampling procedures, in my view, provided Fobih with an opportunity to contextually understand the school dropout problem.

The main findings of the Fobih (1987) study showed that early school leaving was caused by home factors, school factors, peer factors, and emotional maladjustment of students. With regard to school factors, Fobih found that students tended to leave school if teachers employed harsh ways of treating students in the school. In this respect, unfair ways of administering punishment were the most cited causes. This finding seems to be similar to what Smyth and Hattam (2002) found among

Australian youths where a number of young people indicated that they left school due to intolerant disciplinary policies applied by school administrators.

Some dropouts felt that the subjects that they had to study in the school curriculum did not have any relevance to the kind of careers that they wanted to pursue. In other words, there was no congruence between education and the benefits from education. Thus, as Fobih (1987) further reports, a number of young people saw the school certificate awarded at the end of schooling as something that possessed no value to them. For this reason, a number of them resorted to engaging themselves in income generating ventures at the expense of schooling. This finding seems to be in line with what other researchers, particularly in the Netherlands have found, namely that sometimes students left school early due to pull factors such as prospects of earning some income (see Dekkers & Claassen, 2001; Dekkers & Driessen, 1997).

Another significant finding from Fobih's (1987) study was that participants were unaware of how they were contributing to the school dropout problem. In other words, participants attributed the problem to forces outside of their domain. For instance, Fobih reports that parents were largely unaware of the role that the home environment played in influencing young people to leave school prematurely; they tended to attribute the school dropout problem to the behavioural maladjustment of the children. Similarly, teachers tended to project the school dropout problem to parents and students. Likewise, dropouts blamed their premature departure from school on teachers and parents. Looking at the cyclical nature of the school dropout factors that Fobih's study yielded, it seems logical to conclude that studying school dropout in fragments may not give a complete picture of the problem. This is the more reason why I have adopted in this study a qualitative interpretative approach which makes a social comparative analysis of the dropouts', parents', and teachers' experiences with regard to the school dropout problem.

Despite the findings from Fobih's (1987) study which indicated that school dropout was influenced by a combination of factors attributable to home and school environments, Fobih reports that home influences seemed to exert the most influence on school dropout. He indicates that parents' unsupportive attitudes towards the

education of their children, early marriage, and pregnancy were found to be the leading home factors which led to school dropout. In relation to how traditional cultural beliefs contributed to school dropout, Fobih observes the following:

Among traditional... people there is often a high cultural expectation for early marriage or childbirth once puberty is reached and initiation rites are performed. Thus, the cultural manhood or womanhood expectations coupled with perhaps the ex-students' lack of adequate knowledge of sexual involvement may have brought them to their present predicament (Fobih, 1987, p. 239).

In recognition of the strong influence that traditional cultural practices have in the process of socializing children (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979), one of the questions that I ask in my study, centres on finding out how societal cultural practices influence choices that adolescents make about schooling.

Fobih's (1987) study seems to have achieved much depth through his diversified sample comprising dropouts, parents, and teachers. Thus, in order to add to Fobih's valuable research approach which was largely quantitative, I have adopted IPA, an interpretative qualitative approach to unravel the meaning of the participants' perspectives on school dropout. Through the social comparative analysis of the participants' experiences and my interpretations of those experiences, I hope to deepen and broaden the understanding of school dropout (see Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004).

In a recent doctoral study, Makwinja-Morara (2007) examined school dropout among junior secondary school females in Botswana. In this study, Makwinja-Morara focuses on investigating how the contextual experiences of young women may have impacted their decision to prematurely leave school. This approach that Makwinja-Morara takes also presents an important departure from the other studies in Africa that have mainly studied school dropout in relation to teen pregnancy. Like Fobih's (1987) study cited earlier, Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study uses a range of research participants: dropouts; students still in school; dropouts in an institution; teachers; an adolescent centre administrator; Non Governmental Organization administrators. This

inclusion of a broad spectrum of research participants seemed to place the researcher in a position to capture the school dropout factors more contextually.

Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study, in my view, would have even been better if it had incorporated a few more aspects. Firstly, I feel the researcher needed to include parents in her sample to better investigate the school dropout problem. She uses a wide range of participants, which gives her a broader understanding of school dropout, however, by leaving out parents, she seems to have left out an important aspect in the life of a student; the family aspect. Earlier studies (e.g. Fobih, 1987; Rumberger, 1983) have demonstrated the critical role played by the home environment in understanding school dropout. Secondly, it seems when reporting the findings, Makwinja-Morara (2007) shifted the focus almost exclusively onto the dropouts; she either glossed over or completely left out the voices of the other array of research participants who she interviewed. It seems a more nuanced interweaving of perspectives from dropouts, teachers, and administrators, might have given the study the depth and breadth that it had intended to capture in the first place. For this reason, in my study, I discuss the findings from dropouts, teachers, and parents simultaneously using the IPA analytical procedures (see Smith, 2004).

Vital findings nonetheless emerged out of Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study. Firstly, she observed that teachers used teaching methods that tended to limit the participation of certain students, particularly less academically gifted students. Secondly, she found that there was inadequate parental involvement in the education of their children, which tended to create a chasm between the home environment and the school environment. I should, however, add that the finding on parental involvement that Makwinja-Morara puts forward should be taken cautiously as she did not include parents in her sample, *per se*; she determined parental involvement by looking at school PTA meeting reports which indicated how regular or irregular parents were in attending school meetings. As regards the reasons given by dropouts for leaving school, Makwinja-Morara reports a diverse spectrum as follows: "poverty, early marriages, teenage pregnancy, defilement by older men, and peer pressure" (2007, p. 149).

I consider Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study as one of the most critical works that have been conducted on school dropout in Africa, for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of the few African studies to have employed a context based qualitative approach in the study of school dropout. Secondly, the study has contributed towards moving the study of school dropout in Africa out of the confines of pregnancy related issues. What is required in future is to build on Makwinja-Morara's contextual approach. I have attempted to do so in this study, firstly, by inter-mingling the discussion of findings from dropouts, parents, and teachers (see chapter five for a detailed explanation of the analytical procedure that I followed). Further, I have used an interpretative approach of analysing data in order to enrich the meaning of participants' accounts about school dropout (see Willig, 2001; Smith et al., 1999).

The review of literature in this section has put into clearer perspective the limitations of the majority of studies on school dropout in Africa which have largely focused on pregnancy related issues. As studies conducted outside Africa have indicated, African studies that have investigated school dropout beyond pregnancy related issues have demonstrated that school dropout is a multifaceted problem that is influenced by several factors. In the next section I present a conclusion that summarizes the African studies on school dropout which I have reviewed in this chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

The review in this chapter has shown that the study of school dropout in Africa is still in its infancy. Most studies conducted in Africa have largely focused on pregnancy related issues among adolescent females. Even so, the few studies that have taken a broader view of school dropout, have indicated, as have studies conducted in the developed world that school dropout is influenced by several other factors over and above pregnancy. Thus, the review has underscored the need to apply a holistic approach in order to better understand the school dropout problem. Having completed the review of literature, I present in the next section a summary of studies that have been conducted on school dropout. This summary will provide the general picture of school dropout research.

4.5 Summary of literature on school dropout

The literature review in this study was guided by the main objective that I sought to address. As a first step, I engaged myself in the broad search for literature on the subject of school dropout. Here the aim was to familiarize myself with the prevailing trends in school dropout research around the globe. Having familiarized myself with the types of research that have been conducted in the area, I then went on to survey the literature to identify patterns, if any, across the various studies conducted around the world. Through the survey of the literature, I came up with the following summary indicating categories of different studies that have been conducted on school dropout:

1. Longitudinal and other cross-sectional studies that have investigated various aspects of school dropout using large statistically representative samples from national data sets. These studies have mainly been conducted in the United States. Due to their use of large statistically representative samples, these studies have been useful in indicating the prevalence and distribution of the problem of school dropout along such factors as gender, race, socioeconomic status, ethnic grouping. Further, these studies have demonstrated that school dropout is a developmental problem which can be traced to the early stages of development in the life of a student. I include in this category the following studies: Garnier et al. (1997), Jimerson et al. (2000), Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992), Alexander et al. (2001), Alexander et al. (1997), Barrington and Hendricks (1989), Rumberger (1983), Astone and McLanahan (1991), Crane (1991), Johnson et al. (2001).
2. Quantitative studies that have related school dropout to specific family and community aspects such as family composition, peer networks, family educational levels, and so on. These studies have used smaller samples than the longitudinal studies. They have particularly been useful in indicating the multifaceted nature of the school dropout problem. The following are the studies here: Rumberger et al. (1990), Janosz et al. (1997), Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997), Parker and Asher (1987).

3. Quantitative studies that have examined school dropout in relation to the school environment. There are not many studies in this category mainly because earlier research on school dropout tended to associate school dropout with individual, and family and/or community aspects. In this respect, schools were viewed as having no role to play in prematurely pushing students out of school. Even if these studies do not seem to be many, they have provided vital insights into understanding how the school environment can influence students to drop out of school. Studies here include: Lee and Burkam (2003), Christle et al. (2007), Voelkl (1997), Pittman and Haughwout (1987).
4. Qualitative studies that have investigated different aspects of school dropout using interviews and/or focus group discussions. As I indicated earlier, qualitative studies only started gaining prominence in the recent past. These studies have added more depth to the understanding of school dropout through engaging the voices of research participants, particularly the voices of the young people who drop out of school. The following are the studies here: Dekkers and Claassen (2001), Patterson et al. (2007/2008), Smyth and Hattam (2002), Suh and Satcher (2005).
5. African studies. Research on school dropout in Africa is still in its infancy. While a few isolated studies were conducted in the late 1980s, most of the studies on school dropout have been conducted in the last ten years. Broadly speaking, there are two sets of studies on school dropout in Africa. The first set, which constitutes the majority of studies conducted, comprises studies that have examined school dropout in relation to pregnancy related issues among adolescent females. Most of these studies have used large quantitative samples drawn from large data sets similar to the ones used in the United States for longitudinal studies. While these studies have indicated the prevalence of pregnancy as a school dropout factor, they seem to have had limitations in accounting for the other equally important school dropout factors. I include the following studies here: Mensch et al. (2001), Johnson-Hanks (2002), Fuller et al. (1995), Duncan (1988), Meekers and Ahmed (1999), Kaufman et al. (2001), Eloundou-Enyegue (2004), Grant and Hallman (2006).

The second set comprises African studies that have taken a much broader view to the study of school dropout. Few though these studies seem to be, they seem to have underscored the findings from studies conducted in the developed world, namely that the school dropout problem is influenced by many factors. In this category I include two studies: Fobih (1987) and Makwinja-Morara (2007).

Having placed the studies in their respective categories, I then went on to critique them. In the critique, I focused on the following areas: the methodology used in the inquiry; the scope of the study; where the study was conducted, the findings yielded and conclusions thereof. Through the critique, I became familiar with the debates in the field of school dropout research. Further, I was able to identify the obtaining gaps in school dropout research around the world.

As can be seen from the literature review that I have covered in the preceding chapters, most studies on school dropout have been conducted in North America, particularly in the United States of America and Canada. A few studies have been conducted in Australia, the Netherlands and Africa. Not much research seems to have been conducted in other parts of Europe and Asian countries. It is not clear why school dropout research seems to have largely been confined to North America. My own assumption is that apart from being a world leader in most areas of research, the United States might have experienced a high level of school dropout due to the large numbers of immigrant students who likely faced a number of school challenges as they adjusted to the new schooling system. Thus, the need to better understand school dropout might have been more in the United States than anywhere else. The development of school dropout research in Canada thus may be attributable to the proximity and similarities of the two countries.

School dropout research mainly started flourishing in the early 1980s and was dominated in those early years by quantitative studies, particularly large longitudinal studies seeking to understand the prevalence of the problem in relation to such sociodemographic variables as race, ethnic grouping, gender, socioeconomic status. In more recent years, however, there seems to have been an increase in a number of

qualitative studies. The shift towards qualitative studies seems to have been necessitated by the need to have more in-depth understanding of school dropout through capturing the voices of the young people who drop out of school. In addition, more and more studies have indicated that school dropout is a complex, multifaceted problem which needs to be understood from different stakeholders' perspectives. To this end, qualitative studies have provided a means by which different stakeholders' voices can be captured.

Through the analysis, interpretation, and discussion that I engaged in throughout the literature review, I have identified a number of areas where I feel my study will add value to the understanding of school dropout in Africa and Zambia in particular. Thus, below I present the main objective of this study and the questions that guided the research process towards the fulfilment of this objective.

4.6 Research Questions

In this study, my main objective was to find out the factors that influenced adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in a rural site of southern Zambia. To fulfil this objective, I addressed the following specific research questions:

1. How do societal cultural practices influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling?
2. How do the communities in which adolescents live influence the choices that they make about schooling?
3. What is the influence of family on the choices that adolescents make about schooling?
4. How do the schools influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling?

To address these research questions, I used the qualitative research methodology which I present in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodology that I used in this study. I have divided the chapter into nine sections. In the first section, I address the rationale for selecting the qualitative research methodology. Following this section is a part where I present a description of the IPA method that I used to analyse the data. In the third section, I present how I did the selection of research participants after which I present some descriptive characteristics of research participants and research site. In section five, I present the data collection techniques namely; semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions which I used. After data collection techniques, I present the procedure that I followed when collecting data in the field. Following the procedure, I present a section on data analysis and interpretation. In the eighth section, I present the different levels at which I did the analysis and interpretation of the data in order to arrive at meanings. I end the chapter with a section dealing with ethical issues.

5.2 Rationale for using qualitative research methodology

This study used qualitative research methodology in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that influenced rural adolescents to drop out of school. Most studies conducted in Africa on school dropout (e.g. Meekers & Ahmed, 1999; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Mensch et al., 2001) have been quantitative and have largely confined the study of school dropout to pregnancy related issues among adolescent females. Studies conducted in the developed world (e.g. Alexander et al., 1997; Suh & Satcher, 2005) have demonstrated that school dropout is a complex problem that is influenced by a multiplicity of factors. Thus, by employing a qualitative approach, my study sought to have an in-depth understanding of the factors that influenced adolescents to drop out of school in a rural site of southern Zambia.

As Reid, Flower and Larkin (2005) argue, research participants in qualitative research give their experiences about the matter which the researcher is investigating. Qualitative research, Swanson and Chapman (1994) also indicate, is concerned with explanation of phenomena being studied. In other words, as Morse (1994) adds, qualitative research is concerned about generating meaning from the phenomena under investigation. To capture the participants' perceptions of the problem of school dropout, I specifically chose the IPA method as the most suitable analytical framework for this study. Thus, in the next few sections, I present a description of the IPA method.

5.2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Whilst being a fairly new interpretative framework in psychology, IPA has its origins in earlier qualitative approaches which have been in operation for many decades (Grigoriou, 2004). Epistemologically, IPA shares some traits with other phenomenological methods that focus on capturing participants' perspectives of phenomena under study (Smith, 2004; Willig, 2001). In this respect, IPA emerges out of the transcendental phenomenological approach which was developed by Husserl in the mid 1930s (Fade, 2004). The hallmark of the transcendental phenomenological approach lies in the description of phenomena from the standpoint of the research participants with no intrusion by the researcher (Willig, 2001; Fade, 2004). On the other hand, IPA is influenced by the interpretative hermeneutics approach which was developed by Heidegger in the late 1920s. The hermeneutics approach believes in the interpretative role of the researcher to unravel meaning from participants' accounts. Unlike the case is with the transcendental approach, the researcher in the hermeneutics approach does not bracket off his/her experiences, but rather uses those experiences to illuminate the meaning of the emergent data (Smith, 2004; Willig, 2001; Reid et al., 2005). Thus, IPA as scholars (e.g. Willig, 2001; Fade, 2004) have indicated, is a product of the combination of phenomenology, a descriptive approach, and hermeneutics, an interpretative approach.

IPA shares a number of traits with other qualitative research approaches, however, there are a number of characteristics that set IPA apart from the other approaches.

Firstly, IPA is an idiographic approach; it allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the individual cases being studied before attempting to relate those cases to one another (Smith, 2004). Secondly, Smith indicates that IPA is an inductive approach which does not begin the research process with a preconceived position on the findings expected; IPA permits the researcher to flexibly change the research to accommodate emerging themes which may not have been in the initial research design. Thirdly, IPA is interested in capturing the idiosyncratic ways in which research participants experience phenomena (Willig, 2001). To this effect, Reid et al. (2005) observe:

Participants are experts on their own experiences and can offer researchers an understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings through telling their own stories, in their own words, and in as much detail as possible...(p. 20).

Fourthly, as earlier alluded to, the process of data interpretation in IPA is based on a combination of participants' personal accounts and the researcher's reflexive interpretations of those accounts (see Willig, 2001; Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2004). In that sense IPA acknowledges that in-depth understanding of phenomena under study requires that the researcher illuminates participants' accounts with his/her reflexive interpretations (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Grigoriou, 2004; Reid et al., 2005). Finally, IPA does not use a particular theoretical framework as the basis for analysing data; data interpretation is guided by a range of theories and literature. Even so, the interpretations that the researcher draws from the data should be grounded in the participants' accounts of the phenomenon being studied (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2004; Willig, 2001).

Initially IPA was developed as a qualitative interpretative approach to be used in the field of health psychology where researchers used it to analyse experiences of participants with various health conditions (Smith et al., 1999; Willig, 2001). For this reason, most studies that have utilised IPA as an analytical framework have been in the field of health psychology. However, as Smith (2004) points out, IPA is a versatile method which researchers in a diverse range of fields outside the field of health psychology can use. Consequently, a number of studies outside the field of health psychology have used IPA. For instance, (Coyle & Rafalin, 2000; Touroni & Coyle,

2002; Turner & Coyle, 2000) have applied IPA in the field of social and counselling psychology. Russell (2004) applied IPA in sports psychology, whereas Sansom (2005) used IPA to interpret participants' experiences in the field of music.

Regardless of whether IPA is used in the field of health psychology or any other field, the aim is to capture the participants' experiences about the phenomenon being investigated (see Smith et al., 1999; Willig, 2001; Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Thus, I found IPA to be an appropriate method to use in this study to capture the participants' experiences about school dropout. Through the idiographic analysis of the participants' accounts (see, Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004), this study hopes to broaden and deepen the understanding of the school dropout problem among adolescents in a rural site of southern Zambia. The study of school dropout in Zambia having been dominated by countrywide, annual surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education (see Ministry of Education, 2001, 2002, 2003), needs a much more in-depth focus which cannot be achieved in such broad quantitative surveys. To this end, Smith and Osborn (2007) support, "IPA is particularly useful where the topic under study is dynamic, contextual and subjective, relatively under-studied"(p. 520). In the next section, I present how sampling is done in IPA studies.

5.2.1.1 Sampling in IPA

IPA has mostly been applied to small homogeneous samples with numbers of participants no higher than 15 (see Smith et al., 1999; Willig, 2001). The reason for using small samples in IPA is in order to allow the researcher to have an in-depth focus on phenomena under investigation through capturing the experiences of the individual research participants (see Smith, 2004; Fade, 2004). However, IPA has also been used with larger samples, particularly where researchers were interested in generating a wide range of participants' perspectives on the issues under investigation. For instance, (Flowers & Buston, 2001; Baillie, Smith, Hewison & Mason, 2000; Russell, 2004; De Visser & Smith, 2007a) have used IPA with samples ranging from 20 to 31 participants. Other studies (e.g. Dean, Smith, Payne & Weinman, 2005; Raphael, Clarke & Kumar, 2006; Reid, McKenna, Fritzsims & McCance, 2009) have used IPA with more than one sample to gain clarity on the issue

being studied. Using a broad range of participants as Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999) argue provides researchers with an opportunity to triangulate the findings.

In a study which they conducted to investigate the patients' and caregivers' experiences with an incurable cancer, Reid et al. (2009) observe that their findings would have been much richer if they had included in their study views from health care professionals. Therefore, the researchers observe that not including health care professionals in a study which was rooted in the medical field robbed their study of much confidence they would have had in making recommendations.

Drawing from the strength of using a triadic approach to understanding phenomena under study as indicated by Reid et al. (2009), I have explored the school dropout problem in this study from the perspective of dropouts, their parents, and teachers who taught at the school attended by the dropouts. The literature that I have reviewed in this study (see chapters two, three, and four) has demonstrated that school dropout is as much a problem of the students who drop out as it is of the parents who raise these children and the teachers who teach them. Thus, it seems to me that getting views about school dropout only from one or two of these three categories of participants would not have given a complete picture about school dropout. To gain first hand information about school dropout, I interviewed young women and men who had dropped out of school. Thus, in the next section I present how participants' experiences can be captured in IPA using retrospective accounts.

5.2.1.2 Use of retrospective accounts in IPA

The majority of IPA studies that have been conducted have mainly focused on investigating issues that participants were experiencing presently. For instance, experiences with long illnesses such as cancer, back pain, and other chronic conditions (see Smith & Osborn, 2007, Reid et al., 2009) have particularly been popular with IPA. The focus on on-going experiential issues is understandable in that as I earlier stated, IPA was initially designed for the field of health psychology to explore patients' experiences with various medical conditions. Further, being a method that seeks to understand phenomena from participants' perspectives, it is

easier to capture experiences of aspects that participants are presently going through (Smith et al., 1999; Smith, 2004; Willig, 2001). Thus, it makes sense that the majority of the IPA studies have been based on current issues experienced by participants (see Coyle & Rafalin, 2000; Reid et al., 2009; Tourni & Coyle, 2002; Dean et al., 2005; Jordan, Eccleston & Osborn 2007; Girigoriou, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Russell, 2004; De Visser & Smith, 2007b).

Even so, there are still a number of studies that have used IPA with retrospective accounts whereby participants were asked to recount their lived experiences from memory (e.g. Turner & Coyle, 2000; Raphael et al., 2006; Seamark & Lings, 2004; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). In these studies, the periods that the participants had to recall their experiences ranged from one day (see Raphael et al., 2006) to 10 years (see Seamark & Lings, 2004). However, while retrospective accounts have been found to be a useful mode of capturing participants' experiences, they like all data collection techniques are not without limitations. One limitation which has been pointed out about retrospective accounts is the possibility of participants altering their experiences due to the passage of time (see Baillie et al., 2000; Smith, 1994). In relation to this limitation, studies have been conducted to determine the level of accuracy of retrospective accounts in capturing participants' experiences.

In a study which sought to find out how reliable retrospective childhood experiences were in explaining the development of psychopathology, Brewin, Andrews and Gotlib (1993), while admitting to some limitations of retrospective accounts, argue that the levels of unreliability of retrospective accounts have largely been blown out proportion. Thus, the researchers indicate that retrospective accounts are still a reliable means of capturing participants' experiences. Similarly, Blane (1996) argues that scholars who discount retrospective accounts as an unreliable means of capturing participants' experiences tend to overlook the fact that the long term memory is able to store information for a long time with no or little change in the accuracy levels. To ascertain the accuracy of memory in storing information, some studies have made comparisons in accuracy levels between recalled information and the stored records of the recalled event. In one study, for instance, Blaxter and Paterson cited in Blane (1996), made a comparison between retrospective interviews and records from 30

years earlier. Blaxter and Paterson's findings indicate that there were almost no differences between the information that was collected through retrospective accounts and what was recorded 30 years earlier. These findings seem to indicate that notwithstanding the limitations that are associated with using retrospective accounts in capturing participants' experiences, retrospective accounts are still a reliable tool for gathering information.

In view of the foregoing, it seems that what is critical is not whether or not an experience is captured retrospectively or from current experiences, what seems to be critical is capturing the participants' lived experiences about the phenomenon under study. However, among other things, to minimise the possible biases of retrospective accounts due to the passage of time (see Baillie et al., 2000; Smith, 1994), I have in this study triangulated the dropouts' retrospective accounts about school dropout with accounts from parents, and teachers. As Elliot et al. (1999) observe, comparing views about a phenomenon from different participants' perspectives acts as triangulation which increases the credibility of the findings generated. In view of this, in the next section, I get into a little more detail about triangulation and how I applied it in my study.

5.3 Triangulation

Triangulation as a research tool originates from the field of physical sciences (Cohen & Manion, 1980). It was, for instance, used to improve the preciseness of decisions made by navigators. In this regard, navigators based their navigational decisions not on one bearing measurement, but on the congruence or convergence of two other measurements generated. Triangulation also found extensive application in the field of land surveying, in fact, the concept of triangulation was first applied in surveying to help land surveyors improve the location of positions. By using two other positions, a surveyor could easily locate his/her position at the intersection of the two positions (Patton, 1999).

In social science research, triangulation has been adopted as a research technique to deepen and broaden the understanding of phenomena under study by taking into

account perspectives of various participants or investigating phenomena using more than one method. Thus, in this respect, triangulation helps improve the credibility of research findings (Patton, 1999; Fielding & Fielding, 1986). As Patton (1999, 2002), and Cohen and Manion (1980) argue, triangulation can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative research methods or to a combination of both methods. Whether it is applied in the field of qualitative research or quantitative research or indeed in studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the rationale for using triangulation remains unaltered, namely that;

...no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of data collection and analysis provide more grist for the research mill (Patton, 1999, p. 1192).

Triangulation as it is used in social science research has several meanings. However, the diversity of these meanings has been summarized by several scholars. For instance, Cohen and Manion (1980), Fielding and Fielding (1986), and Patton (1999, 2002), have identified the following four broad types of triangulation, namely: method triangulation; triangulation of sources; analyst triangulation; and theory/perspective triangulation. In methods triangulation, the researcher's interest is in seeing whether there are consistencies in the data generated by different methods. Sources triangulation entails the researcher applying a single method to different data sources and comparing the results generated thereof. Analyst triangulation is used to check the accuracy of data analysis carried out by a researcher. This is especially critical for qualitative research where mostly data are interpreted from the subjective perspective of the researcher. Perspective triangulation is also used to check the credibility of the findings generated by drawing data on a single phenomenon from different theoretical perspectives.

With regard to my study, I have used triangulation of data sources. Specifically, I have triangulated the views of the dropouts on the problem of school dropout with those of parents, and teachers. As Patton (2002) argues, triangulating participants' perspectives on a phenomenon being studied, not only improves clarity of the phenomenon, but also improves credibility of the findings generated. In the next section, I present how I merged the data from the three data sources that I used.

5.3.1 Integration of triangulated data

Triangulation in and of itself is of little use if it is not used to link the data from different sources or perspectives given by different participants to bring clarity to the phenomenon being studied. To this effect, Patton (2002) argues:

Triangulation in whatever form, increases the credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's blinders (p. 563).

However, Patton (2002) makes a caution on the use of triangulation. He points out that the goal of triangulation in research is not to generate data that present similar or identical pictures about the phenomenon under study; rather the aim is to capture the similarities and/or diversities in perspectives and use them to illuminate the phenomenon being studied. Thus, Patton (1999) argues:

An understanding of inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative. Finding such inconsistencies ought not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study (p. 1193).

Thus, with regard to my study which investigated school dropout from the perspective of dropouts, parents, and teachers, the aim was not to achieve congruence or agreement in the participants' perspectives, but rather to use those perspectives (conflicting and/or similar) to help deepen and broaden the understanding of school dropout.

This brings me to one of the most critical questions asked about triangulation: how are the data generated from multiple sources or through different methods merged to form a coherent whole that helps in achieving a better understanding of phenomena being studied? This as most scholars will appreciate, is not an easy question to answer, not least because researchers triangulate for several reasons. To this effect, Patton (2002) and Bazeley (2009) argue that the merging of triangulated data largely depends on the researcher's adaptive creativity to enable him/her integrate the data in a manner which

helps derive credible conclusions about the phenomenon he/she is investigating. In this regard, Patton (2002) uses a metaphor that seems appropriate:

Just as machines that were originally created for separate functions such as printing, faxing, scanning, and copying have now been combined into a single integrated technological unit, so too methods that were originally created as distinct, stand-alone approaches can now be combined into more sophisticated and multifunctional designs (p. 252).

As Greene (2008) and Caracelli and Greene (1993) point out, integration of triangulated data involves the researcher doing a joint, interactive interpretation of data drawn from the multiple sources. To achieve this process, my data analysis involved an interactive engagement between the perspectives of dropouts, parents, and teachers. For instance, when discussing the theme: pregnancy as a route to marriage (one of the themes which emerged from my study), I explored the views of the dropouts on this particular theme and related them to the teachers' and parents' views on the same theme. Through the variations and/or similarities observed in the participants' accounts, I was able to gain some depth in the understanding of how pregnancy led to school dropout. Similarly, for the theme: parents forcing their daughters into early marriages (another theme which emerged from this study), I interpreted the dropouts' accounts in relation to what the parents and teachers observed about the same theme.

The use of these three perspectives on school dropout is comparable to beaming three spotlights on an object from three different angles. No particular angle of the spotlight can be said to capture the only true form of the object; the true form of the object lies in combining the images captured from the three spotlight angles. To this end, Patton makes a poignant observation that seems to speak to the usefulness of integrating triangulated data:

It is in data analysis that the strategy of triangulation really pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn (2002, p. 556).

My interpretation of the findings in this study also involved constantly making comparative linkages between the three data sets (dropouts, parents, and teachers). Thus, in this sense, the interpretative process that I engaged in also constituted triangulating the participants' triangulated views with my own interpretation of those views (Cohen & Manion, 1980). Earlier IPA studies (e.g. Dean et al., 2005; Raphael et al., 2006; Grigoriou, 2004; Reid, et al., 2009) which used triangulation of data sources applied similar techniques of integrating data. The process of integrating data which I applied will become clearer when I present in section 5.10 below the procedure that I followed to analyse and interpret data in this study. In the meantime, I turn to the selection of research participants for this study.

5.4 Selection of research participants

For this study, 10 dropouts (five females and five males) from Haacizibe Village, a rural site in southern Zambia, were purposively selected. The selection of the dropouts was done on the basis of them having dropped out of school at basic school level after the year 1996. As explained in the introduction, this period was critical for this study because during this time, the Ministry of Education introduced free basic education and passed a policy which allowed adolescent mothers to continue with school. Despite these pronouncements by the Ministry of Education, however, the school dropout problem seems to have persisted, especially in the rural areas (see statistics in chapter one). Therefore, by drawing a qualitative sample of participants who dropped out of school after the year 1996, this study sought to find out why school dropout has persisted in spite of the Ministry of Education giving all young people a chance to complete basic school. A few other dropouts within Haacizibe Village who met the criteria for selection as explained, but were not included in the individual one-to-one interviews were included in the focus group discussions (see section 5.7 below for the numbers of additional participants included in the focus group discussions). Additional participants were included in the focus group discussions in order to enable the participants to have an interaction which would allow them to share their experiences about school dropout. To this effect, Rabiee (2004) observes that the interaction between participants in a focus group discussion allows a variety of perspectives to be generated on the subject matter under study.

A total of 10 parents of the selected dropouts were also included in the sample. Some of the adult family members who formed the extended family but were not included in the individual interviews were included in the focus group discussions (see section 5.7 below for the numbers of additional parents included in focus group discussions). Anthropologist Pamela Hunte used a similar sampling procedure in her study of household decision-making and school enrolment in Afghanistan (Hunte, 2005). In more recent studies, Abu-Rabia-Queder (2006, 2007), investigated the school dropout problem among the Bedouin females of the Negev area in Israel and used similar sampling procedures. Much earlier, Fobih (1987) employed similar sampling techniques in his study of school dropout in Eastern Ghana.

In order to get the views of teachers on the problem of school dropout, five teachers from Bbombo Basic School, a rural government basic school in Haacizibe Village were also included in the sample. The selection of Bbombo Basic School was done on the basis that all the dropouts interviewed in this study attended this same school. This would provide an opportunity to study the problem of school dropout holistically in that the participants were largely exposed to the same school experiences. In line with the IPA method which I adopted in this study as my analytical framework, integrating the individual experiences of dropouts, parents, and teachers would help deepen and broaden the understanding of the problem of school dropout (see Dean et al., 2005; Raphael et al., 2006; Grigoriou, 2004; Reid, et al., 2009).

To identify the school dropouts, I used the networking approach; asking people I knew through social interaction, work or church affiliation, to direct me to families which had dropouts. Hennink (2007) supports this method of identifying research participants. He points out that sometimes it may be difficult for a researcher to identify a population with the specific characteristics that he/she is looking for. In those cases, Hennink advocates the use of what he calls the, “snow ball” (2007, p. 103) method of recruiting research participants. The snow ball method as Hennink explains involves recruiting research participants through asking people in the targeted neighbourhoods to help identify participants who possess the qualities that the researcher is looking for. Once earlier participants have been identified, they can then be used to identify the other research participants (Hennink, 2007). Abu-Rabia-

Queder (2007) and Makwinja-Morara (2007) used a similar technique to locate their research participants. Through networking, I was guided to families that had dropouts and once that happened, it became easier to get to the subsequent families since families in the area knew which other families had dropouts.

The sample size for this study was decided upon in accordance with the requirements of qualitative research namely to have a sample small enough to enable a researcher have an in-depth look at phenomena under investigation (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). In addition, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue:

Qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random and that this tendency is partly because social processes have a logic and coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust (p. 27).

In a similar manner, Patton (1990) argues that the careful selection of research participants in a purposive sample provides a researcher with an opportunity to have a broader and deeper understanding of the research subject matter.

Finally, I selected a purposive sample of dropouts, their parents, and teachers in order to gain a broader understanding of the meanings that the participants attached to their experiences of school dropout. Such triangulation of data sources has been found to be useful in increasing depth in the understanding of phenomena under study in previous studies that have used IPA as their interpretative framework (see Dean et al., 2005; Raphael et al., 2006; Grigoriou, 2004). Presented below is a descriptive summary of the characteristics of the sample that I used in this study.

5.5 Description of research participants and research site

5.5.1 Description of Haacizibe Village

Haacizibe Village is located near the central part of Southern province, one of Zambia's nine provinces. It is about 25 kilometres east of a small town of Choma. Haacizibe Village is a typical rural setting which is dominated by traditional Tonga customs and cultural beliefs. A typical homestead (see Figure 1 below) in Haacizibe

Village comprises: a two to three roomed thatched house which serves as sleeping quarters for parents and little children; a single, usually round shaped hut which serves as a kitchen; and another house, usually one or two roomed, which serves as sleeping quarters for grown up children (once children; boys and girls, enter puberty, they are allocated separate sleeping quarters usually away from the parents'). I should, however, mention that the number of houses per family will vary depending on the number of grown up children in a particular family and whether or not the head of the family has more than one wife.

The allocation of roles in Haacizibe Village is done along gender lines. Girls and women are mainly expected to fulfil chores such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, fetching firewood, gardening, and other similar ones. Boys and men on the other hand are expected to fulfil roles such as taking care of livestock, ploughing the fields, building and/or repairing houses. Most people in Haacizibe Village struggle to earn a living; survival is mainly through subsistence farming, gardening, selling vegetables at the market, and doing odd jobs.

Bbombo Basic School is a rural government school located on the western side of Haacizibe Village. The school comprises three by two (i.e. three blocks each with two classrooms) classroom blocks (see Figure 4 below) and caters for children from Haacizibe Village and some surrounding villages. Because of the large number of children that attend Bbombo Basic School, the classrooms are overcrowded; some of them go to well over 80 students (see chapter six). Below I present photographs showing some key aspects of Haacizibe Village:



Figure 1: A typical homestead in Haacizibe Village



Figure 2: A tomato garden belonging to one of the female dropouts in Haacizibe Village



Figure 3: The roadside market in Haacizibe Village



Figure 4: Bbombo Basic School

In the section below, I present a summary describing the research participants.

5.5.2 Description of research participants

Table 10: Female dropouts

Part	Marital status	Age at drop	Age at interview	Livelihood	Grade of dropout	Mother's educ	Father's educ
1	Married	16	19	Gardening	Grade 7	Grade 7	Grade 9
2	Married	18	21	Gardening	Grade 9	Grade 9	Grade 9
3	Married	18	20	Selling at the market	Grade 9	Grade 4	Grade 4
4	Married	18	21	Gardening	Grade 9	Grade 6	Grade 7
5	Single	16	18	Selling at the market	Grade 7	Grade 11	Grade 7

The sources of income for these young women included gardening and selling at the market. Parents' levels of education were quite low for all the dropouts; except one parent who went as far as the eleventh grade, the rest of the parents did not go beyond the ninth grade.

Table 11: Male dropouts

Part	Marital status	Age at drop	Age at Interview	Livelihood	Grade of dropout	Mother's educ	Father's educ
1	Single	15	18	Black Smith	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 12
2	Single	18	19	Gardening	Grade 9	Grade 7	Grade 5
3	Married	17	20	Gardening	Grade 9	Grade 7	Standard 3
4	Married	18	21	Black Smith	Grade 9	Grade 7	Grade 7
5	Single	19	22	Farm Labourer	Grade 7	Did not go to school	-

Male dropouts had a diversity of livelihoods as can be seen from the table. With regard to parents' education, apart from one dropout whose father went as far as the twelfth grade, the other dropouts' parents either had no education at all or only went

up to the seventh grade. Participant five was raised by his mother. Below I present the data collection techniques that I used for this study.

5.6 Data collection techniques

I collected the data for this study using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. I found the two data collection techniques most suitable for my study because of their use of open-ended questions which allow the researcher some flexibility in the research process to capture any relevant emerging themes (see Gray, 2004; Corbetta, 2003). As a study using the IPA method, these techniques also enabled me to capture the participants' perspectives of the school dropout problem.

5.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews as Gray (2004) explains are a non-standard interviewing approach which is mainly used in qualitative research. While the researcher will have a list of predetermined open-ended questions to ask the participants, the sequence in which the questions are asked in a semi-structured interview is determined by the issues that arise in each interview. As Corbetta indicates:

The order in which the various topics are dealt with and the wording of the questions are left to the interviewer's discretion. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as he thinks fit, to ask the questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best, to give explanations and ask for clarifications if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate further if necessary, and to establish his own style of conversation (2003, p. 270).

I was also drawn to semi-structured interviews due to their ability to let research participants talk about their experiences in their own words (Reid et al., 2005; Smith, 2004). Through the participants' personal accounts about the experiences they had with school dropout, some in-depth understanding of the problem would be generated.

Willig (2001) clarifies:

The semi-structured interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience. The questions asked by the researcher function as triggers that encourage the participant to talk (p. 22).

As a method that values participants' own perceptions of phenomena under study, semi-structured interviews are most suitable for collecting IPA data (see Willig, 2001; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith, 1995). In the semi-structured interviews, I used interview guides with open-ended questions to explore participants' various experiences with school dropout (see section 5.7 below for description of the questions that I used in the interview guides).

Through the use of open-ended questions and probing the participants, I was able to capture a wide range of issues which emerged from the responses that participants gave. Willig (2001) speaks of the usefulness of semi-structured interviews in capturing a broad range of data through the use of probes on issues of interest that may emerge from the interview.

5.6.2 Focus group discussions

There are a number of definitions of what a focus group discussion is. Lederman cited in Rabiee (2004), for instance, defines a focus group discussion as:

a technique involving the use of in-depth group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population to discuss a given topic (p. 655).

Krueger (1994) gives a similar definition; he conceptualises focus groups as purposively selected groups of about six to ten subjects assembled for purposes of discussing a chosen subject matter of the researcher's interest. Hennink (2007) defines focus group discussions as a special data collection method where a pre-selected group of research participants is assembled to discuss a set of issues on which a researcher would like to have deeper and broader understanding. Unlike in individual

interviews, Hennink observes that the aim in focus group discussions is to generate a diverse range of perspectives around the research topic being studied. However, like is the case with individual interviews, Hennink (2007) indicates, as have Krueger and Casey (2000) that focus groups aim to capture research participants' perspectives. Hennink (2007) further argues that focus group discussions are able to generate much deeper and richer data than one-to-one interviews because they closely simulate the normal day-to-day interactions that people engage in as they go about life. Another advantage of focus group discussions over individual interviews as Krueger and Casey (2000) argue is their ability to generate a large amount of rich data within a short time.

Focus group discussions can stand on their own as a data collection method. However, they can also be used as an additional data collection technique along side other techniques (Morgan, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998). With regard to this study, I have used focus groups along side semi-structured interviews. Babbie (2003) and Willig (2001) support this methodological triangulation as a useful means to enrich data. Other researchers, who have used IPA as their analytical framework, have used focus group discussions to collect data. For instance, Jordan et al. (2007) in their study investigating experiences of parents who had adolescents with complex chronic pain, used focus group discussions to generate data on the various perspectives of parents with regard to the chronic illness. In a study which sought to find out whether person-centred care for persons with dementia was sustainable, Gladman, Jones, Walker and Rothera (2007), used focus group discussions along with non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Also in a recent study cited above, de Visser and Smith (2007b) combined individual interviews and focus group discussions in a study where they investigated how young men perceived their alcohol consumption in relation to their masculine identity.

I utilised open-ended questions as the bases for the focus group discussions (see section 5.7 below for the description of the questions in the focus group discussion guide). Further, as I did with individual interviews, I used probes to follow up on relevant issues that came up during the discussions (Patton, 1990).

Different scholars suggest different figures as the ideal number of participants in a focus group discussion. Krueger and Casey (2000), for instance, suggest a minimum of six and a maximum of eight participants. Rabiee (2004) suggests a range between six and ten. Whatever the number of participants, the bottom line seems to be that a focus group should enable all participants to get engaged in the conversation. Thus, Rabiee indicates that the group should be, “large enough to gain a variety of perspectives and small enough not to become disorderly or fragmented” (2004, p. 656). As regards the duration of the discussions, Rabiee recommends anywhere between an hour and two hours, depending on the complexity of the subject matter being discussed and the interaction between participants. In the next section, I present the procedure that I followed when collecting data for this study.

5.7 Procedure

I conducted the first round of field work starting the first week to the last week of August 2006. First, I conducted individual interviews with the female and male dropouts. The questions that I asked the dropouts focused on the following aspects: how the dropouts found the pursuit of formal schooling; the dropouts’ reasons for dropping out of school; the support that the dropouts received from the school; the support dropouts received from their parents; how the school responded to students’ non academic social challenges; the dropouts’ perceptions of the families and communities in which they lived in relation to schooling; how young people were inducted into society as adults (see appendix D for the interview guide that I used with the dropouts). These interviews were each between an hour and two hours long.

When I completed the individual interviews with the dropouts, I then conducted the individual interviews with the female parents, and male parents. Parents’ questions covered the following areas: demographic aspects; the parents’ perception of formal education; the support that parents gave their children in the pursuit of education; parents’ perceptions of what leads adolescents to drop out of school; parents’ reactions when their child dropped out of school; parents’ collaboration with teachers; parents’ views on how adolescents were integrated into society as fully fledged adults (see appendix E for the interview guide that I used with the parents). The duration of

interviews varied between one hour and two hours. After conducting the individual interviews, focus group discussions were then conducted with the dropouts and the parents.

First, I conducted the focus group discussion with female dropouts. The focus group discussion with the female dropouts comprised all the five participants who I had interviewed individually, and an additional three participants who were not included in the individual interviews. Similarly, the focus group discussion with the male dropouts comprised eight participants; the five who I had had individual interviews with and an additional three who were not part of the individual interviews. The inclusion of the three dropouts who were not part of the individual interviews was done in order to achieve the recommended optimal numbers required for fruitful, diverse, interactive discussions (see Krueger & Casey, 2000; Rabiee, 2004). The following were the areas covered in the focus group discussions with the dropouts: dropouts' experiences at school; the dropout's career aspirations while they were still at school; family support in the dropouts' pursuit of education; the practice of parents forcing their school going daughters to get married; parents' reactions when their child dropped out of school; how young people were integrated into society as fully fledged adults (see appendix G for the focus group discussion guide that I used with the dropouts). The focus group discussions with the dropouts lasted about one hour each.

Two focus group discussions were also conducted with the parents. The female parents' focus group discussion was composed of all the five who I had had individual interviews with, and an additional four who were not included in the individual interviews. The male parents' group had four participants who I had interviewed individually and an additional two participants who were not part of the individual interviews. In the focus group discussions with parents, the following topics were covered: parents' career expectations of their children; parents' views on the factors that lead to school dropout among adolescents; parents' reactions when a school going girl falls pregnant; parents' perception of formal schooling; how marriages took place in the community (see appendix H for the detailed focus group discussion guide that I

used with the parents). The focus group discussions with the parents were a little over an hour long each.

All the interviews and focus group discussions with the dropouts and parents were conducted outside, mostly under quiet, shady trees. This was because most houses in Haacizibe Village were too small (see Figure 1 for the typical house size in Haacizibe Village). In recognition of the sometimes inevitable lack of indoor space to conduct focus group discussions, Hennink (2007) argues that focus group discussions do not have to be conducted indoors; they can be conducted in outdoor venues or in some temporary places specifically arranged for the discussions. In this regard, Hennink observes, “Although an indoor venue is preferred as it will be quiet and private, many group discussions are held in outdoor locations” (2007, p. 153).

When I completed the individual interviews and focus group discussions with dropouts and parents, I then moved to Bbombo Basic School. There I first conducted the individual interviews with the teachers. The interviews with the teachers focused on the following areas: the experiences that teachers had with students who drop out of school; the support that the school gives to those students who are on the verge of dropping out; how teachers organised their classes for instruction; the support given by the school to students on non academic challenges; how the policy which allows adolescent mothers to continue with school had fared; teachers’ views on their collaboration with parents in the community; teachers’ views on how parents react when their children dropped out of school; teachers’ views on how families and communities relate to students’ pursuit of formal schooling (see appendix F for the interview guide that I used with the teachers). These interviews were conducted in a classroom and lasted between an hour and an hour and half. Following the completion of the individual interviews with the teachers, I then conducted the focus group discussion with them.

The teachers’ focus group discussion was also conducted in a classroom. It only comprised the five teachers who I had interviewed individually (apart from one teacher who was away at the time, the five were the only teachers at Bbombo Basic) and was about an hour long. The focus group discussion addressed the following

topics: teachers' experiences with adolescents who drop out of school; the effectiveness or lack of it of the Ministry of Education policy which allows adolescent mothers to continue with school; teachers' experiences with regard to girls who leave school to get married; teachers' perceptions of surrounding communities' response to formal schooling; how the school supported students in their academic and non academic challenges; how teachers organised their classes for instruction (see appendix I for the guide that I used in the focus group discussion with the teachers).

Apart from individual interviews and the focus group discussion with teachers which were conducted in English, all the interviews and focus group discussions with dropouts and parents were conducted in Chitonga, the local language of the participants. This was done to allow the participants to express themselves freely. I am a native speaker of the Chitonga language. I conducted all the interviews and moderated all the focus group discussions in order to maintain consistency in data collection, analysis and interpretation. All the interviews and focus group discussions were audio-taped so as to allow for translation, transcription, and more thorough analysis and interpretation afterwards. I did the transcription, translation, and analysis of all the interviews and focus group discussions.

After spending sometime looking through the data that I had collected in the first round of data collection, I realized that I needed to go back to the field to fill the gaps that I had noticed in the data. I specifically needed to go back to the field to interview some selected dropouts more on aspects to do with their experiences whilst at school. Thus, I had another round of individual interviews with three dropouts in the first week of August, 2007. Hunte in her study conducted in Afghanistan on Household decision making and school enrolment used a similar approach. This as she indicated was done to include aspects that she had not included in the original research design (Hunte, 2005). Kvale (1995) uses the analogy of a crafts man to show the flexibility of the qualitative research methodology:

Validation comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. In a craftsmanship approach to validation, the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end of the production line to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production (p. 27).

Below I present a section on the data analysis procedure that I followed in this study.

5.8 Data Analysis

For this study, I analysed the data using the IPA method. As I have already indicated, I was drawn to the IPA method due to its combined use of the phenomenological and hermeneutics principles of data interpretation (see Grigoriou, 2004; Willig, 2001; Smith et al., 1999). The combination of the description of the participants' accounts and my interpretation of those accounts would provide me with an opportunity to have a more in-depth understanding of the school dropout problem. Secondly, I was drawn to IPA due to its idiographic approach whereby data are analysed starting with each individual transcript of a participant. By using this idiographic approach, I would be able to capture the individual participants' experiences with regard to school dropout (Willig, 2001). Finally, I chose IPA because of its emphasis on the integration of cases (see Reid et al., 2005). The integration of different participants' perspectives on school dropout would give a broader and more in-depth understanding of school dropout.

While IPA subscribes to the phenomenological views of understanding phenomena being studied, it also emphasises the importance of the researcher applying his/her own interpretative input to clarify the meaning emerging from the participants' experiences (Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004). To this end, Smith et al. (1999) stress that in IPA the researcher plays a critical analytical role in the process of deriving meaning from the participants' accounts. In other words, unravelling meaning from participants' transcripts in IPA as Reid et al. (2005) clarify, involves establishing a balance between the perspective of the research participants and the perspective of the researcher. They clarify:

In the emic (phenomenological, insider) position, the researcher begins by hearing people's stories, and prioritises the participants' world view...In the etic (interpretative, outsider) position, the researcher attempts to make sense of the participants' experiences and concerns, and to illuminate them in a way that answers a particular research question (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22).

Below I present an outline of how data are interpreted using IPA.

5.9 Data interpretation in IPA

Interpretation of data in IPA is based firstly on the perceptions of the research participants. In this sense, the researcher allows the perceptions of the research participants of the phenomenon under investigation to unfold with minimal intrusion (Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004). Secondly, the researcher unravels meaning from the participants' accounts by using his/her own reflexive interpretations (Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004; Russell, 2004). However, as explained above (see Smith, 1997; Willig, 2001), rather than being separate or opposing dichotomies of interpretation, these two forms of data interpretation in IPA complement each other to deepen and broaden the meaning that is derived from the participants' experiences.

To authentically contextualise participants' accounts, Brocki and Wearden (2006) suggest that the researcher should constantly make linkages between what the participants say in earlier parts of interviews with what they say in the subsequent parts. Secondly, IPA analysis requires the researcher to interpret the emergent data by making comparisons between different participants' accounts (Willig, 2001; Smith, 2004). Further, IPA interpretations make use of a wide range of theoretical positions and literature available to illuminate the emergent data (Smith, 2004; Reid et al., 2005).

Brocki and Wearden (2006), however, observe as does Smith (2004) that one of the major challenges facing IPA researchers is on the criteria to use to determine what the acceptable levels of interpretation are. Smith (2004) suggests three levels of interpretation in IPA as follows: social comparison; temporal analysis; and metaphorical analysis. At the social comparison level, Smith indicates that the interpretation is based on comparing various social aspects raised by research participants in interviews. These social comparisons as Smith indicates can be made within and/or across participants' accounts. In a study conducted to investigate patients' and caregivers' experiences with an incurable cancer, for instance, Reid et al. (2009) made use of social comparisons by comparing what the patients and caregivers observed about their experiences with the disease. Temporal analysis consists in interpretation of phenomena in reference to different time periods in the lives of the

research participants. Temporal analyses are particularly useful in studies that make comparisons of participants' experiences during different time periods of their lives. For instance, in a study cited above conducted to examine some adult women's experiences as adolescent mothers, Seamark and Lings (2004) made use of temporal analyses by referring to the experiences that these women had at different stages during adolescence.

Finally, at the metaphorical level of analysis, Smith (2004) indicates that the researcher looks beyond the surface of the words and ventures to understand the deeper meaning of what the participants are communicating with their verbal and non verbal language. Smith further states that interpretation of data at the metaphorical level also entails the researcher explaining figurative or allusive expressions that participants may use to encapsulate their experiences about the phenomenon being studied.

Smith (2004), however, observes that while there are these outlined levels of analysis in IPA, researchers are still faced with the challenge of knowing and determining what level of analysis is acceptable. Smith argues that the ability to engage in deep data interpretation is something that a researcher acquires over time- the more one uses IPA, the deeper and broader their interpretation becomes. Thus, Smith observes that the aim of beginning users of IPA should be that, "of producing an analysis which is 'good enough' rather than feeling forced to produce one which is devastatingly insightful" (2004, p. 46). Smith further points out that even among the 'experienced' users of IPA, attaining deeply metaphorical levels of interpretation in psychology remains a rarity which only few scholars manage to achieve. Thus, according to Smith, a 'good enough' level of interpretation for a student would be at the social comparison level. He indicates:

...I would expect a student to be producing interpretation at something like the first level...social comparisons, and would be pleased, though not requiring, an analysis ...in terms of the metaphors used (Smith, 2004, p. 46).

For this study, I mainly interpreted the findings at two levels; the social comparison level, and the metaphorical level. In the next section, I present a detailed explanation of the data analysis and interpretation process that I followed in this study.

5.10 How I did the data analysis and interpretation

I conducted the data analysis and interpretation in this study in accordance with the stipulations of IPA (see Smith, 2004; Willig, 2001; Grigoriou, 2004). To begin with, I read each transcript several times to enable me become cognizant of the pertinent issues that were emerging from the participants' accounts in accordance the research objectives. As I read each individual transcript, I made notes in the left margins (Willig, 2001). These notes provided general indications of the content of various sections of the transcripts and were centred on such issues as; the language used, descriptions used, expressions of attitudes about various aspects of school dropout. This initial stage of data analysis enabled me to have a broad understanding of each transcript before I could engage into much deeper analyses (Grigoriou, 2004).

In the second stage of analysis, I got engaged in examining the individual transcripts for some emerging themes. At this stage I, for instance, identified the following pool of themes: pregnancy as a route to marriage; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; the female initiation rite influences girls to drop out of school; lack of students' support systems in schools; no help from teachers; school syllabi being too academic; lack of role models; bad influence from peers; lack of parental involvement in their children's education, low socioeconomic status. I recorded these themes in the right margin of the transcripts (Willig, 2001).

At the third stage of analysis, I started sifting through the themes generated in the individual transcripts to see what patterns these themes formed. In order that I did not miss any themes that might still be emerging from the transcripts, however, I constantly made cross-comparisons between the themes that I had generated in the second stage of analysis and the text of the transcripts. Three categories of themes emerged at this stage. The first category comprised the following themes: pregnancy as a route to marriage; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; the female

initiation rite influences girls to drop out of school. I assigned this category of themes the descriptive tag “cultural factors” of school dropout. In the second category were the following themes: lack of students’ support system in school; no help from teachers; school syllabi being too academic. I gave this category of themes the label “school factors” of school dropout. Finally, the third category of themes comprised the following themes: lack of role models; bad influence from peers, education is a waste of time, low socioeconomic status, lack of parental involvement in their children’s education. I called this category of themes “family and community” school dropout factors. I recorded these themes on a separate sheet to create room for establishing connections between themes in the next stage of analysis. Reid et al. (2009) recommend this format of recording categories of themes in IPA.

Having organised all the themes into their respective thematic categories, the next stage was for me to form a summary table for each transcript. For each of the themes generated under the three main themes as indicated above, I drew out key phrases from each participant’s accounts and indicated the lines and page numbers where the full excerpts of those phrases could be found in the transcripts. I did this in order to have easy access to the excerpts in the individual transcripts when discussing the findings. With the summary tables of each transcript formed, the next stage was for me to merge the themes from various participants, what Willig (2001) and Smith (2004) refer to as the integration of cases.

In this study, I had three data sets namely; data from dropouts, data from parents, and data from teachers. First, to integrate the themes in each of these categories of participants, I made comparisons of the themes that I had generated across all the individual cases in each category. This process involved a continuous back and forth movement between individual transcripts to ensure that if there were still other themes emerging from the transcripts, they could be captured (see Fig. 1 below for an illustration of the cyclic process of data analysis which I followed). I integrated the parents’ and teachers’ transcripts in exactly the same manner. Through this process, I was able to come up with the final categories of themes which comprehensively captured the data from the participants in each data set. Reid et al. (2009) employed a

similar technique of integrating data in their study on patients' and caregivers' experiences with an incurable cancer.

The final stage of data analysis in this study involved the integration of participants' perspectives from the three data sets. Since the rationale of interviewing dropouts, parents, and teachers was to get a broader and deeper understanding of school dropout, merging these data sources offered an opportunity for triangulation (see Cohen & Manion, 1980; Patton, 1999, 2002). While there were variations in the specific perspectives given by individual participants about themes, the data in all the three data sets could fit into the three main descriptive thematic categories designating how the participants perceived school dropout. These main themes were: cultural factors; family and community factors; and school factors. Thus, when discussing themes under the main theme of cultural factors, for instance, I made comparisons between what the dropouts said about a particular theme with what parents, and teachers said about that theme. I did the same for the other themes. Through this approach, I was able to triangulate the participants' views and thus, gain more clarity on the school dropout problem. Other researchers (e.g. Raphael et al., 2006; Grigoriou, 2004; Reid et al., 2009; Dean et al., 2005), who used IPA with more than one sample, used a similar triangulation approach of integrating participants' perspectives.

Fig. 5 below summarises the cyclic data analysis process that I followed in this study.

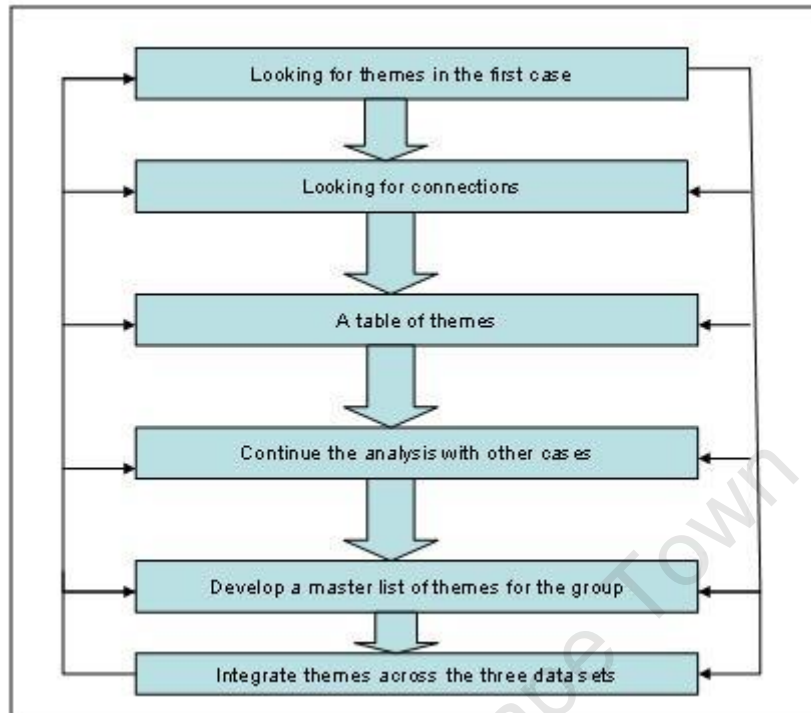


Figure 5: The cyclic process of data analysis

Adapted from Reid et al. (2009, p. 609)

In order to ground the interpretation of findings in the participants' accounts, I have included, quotations giving the actual words used by participants. Along with the words of the participants, in line with the stipulations of data interpretation in IPA, I present my own interpretative arguments as researcher (Willig, 2001; Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith, 2004). As earlier indicated, for this study, I mainly interpreted the findings at the social comparison level within and across the three data sets. However, where the interview excerpts warranted it, I also applied some metaphorical interpretations to unravel the meaning in the figurative and allusive language used by the participants (see Smith, 2004).

In this study, while I used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as the modes of collecting data, the analysis revealed that the themes generated through the two data collection techniques were largely the same. Thus, I have merged the findings from the two data collection techniques. De Visser and Smith (2007b) in their study investigating alcohol consumption and masculine identity among young

men in London, England also combined findings generated from individual interviews and focus group discussions for similar reasons.

As with all research, the fulfilment of ethical requirements for this study was of critical importance. Thus, in the next section, which is the final section of this methodology chapter, I make a presentation of how I fulfilled the ethical requirements for this study.

5.11 Ethical considerations

As a first step towards fulfilling the ethical requirements, I got a letter of introduction from the University of Cape Town, Department of Psychology which designated me as a registered PhD student there. The letter also gave an overview of what my research was about. Secondly, before conducting any interviews, I gave each research participant a consent form which gave them the freedom to accept or decline to take part in the study. The introductory letter and consent form both explicitly stated that all information provided by the participants would be held confidentially and that participants' names would not be used in the research report (see appendices A & C). I also went to the Ministry of Education Headquarters in Lusaka where I obtained an authorization letter to conduct the study (see appendix B). This letter from the Ministry of Education accompanied the consent form and letter of introduction and was presented at the research site before commencing field work.

Before commencing the field work, I reported myself to the village headman, Headman Haacizibe, the head of the village where I conducted the research. There, I presented all my documentation and was cleared to conduct the field work. At Bbombo Basic School, I got clearance to conduct the study from the head teacher of the school.

At the beginning of each interview, the consent form was read out so that the participants would know what the study was about and as such make an informed decision whether they would like to take part in the study or not. The consent form and introductory letter were translated into the Chitonga language to cater for the

dropouts and parents who were not conversant with the English language. In the next section, I present the conclusion which makes a summary of this whole methodology chapter.

5.12 Conclusion

In this methodology chapter, I have presented the rationale for choosing the qualitative research methodology for this study. Specifically, I have argued why the IPA method, a qualitative approach which allows the researcher to use a combination of phenomenological description and hermeneutics interpretation to analyse data, provided a better chance to have a more in-depth understanding of the school dropout problem. As a study exploring the problem of school dropout from three perspectives, I have explained in this chapter how I merged the dropouts', parents', and teachers' perspectives to gain a broader and deeper understanding of school dropout. In addition, I have demonstrated how the use of these three sources of data created an opportunity for triangulation, a technique which increases the credibility of research findings. In the next chapter, I present the findings that emerged from this study.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings that emerged from interviews and focus group discussions with the three sets of participants; dropouts, parents, and teachers. Three main themes namely; cultural factors, family and community factors, and school factors signifying factors which influenced adolescents to drop out of school emerged from the analysis of the data. From the descriptive labels of the themes, there may be a suggestion of uniformity in participants' perspectives, however, there were a number of variations between and among the three categories of participants on a number of themes. On the other hand, there were also some areas of commonality of perspective among the participants.

As I have already indicated, I had dropouts, parents, and teachers as my research participants in this study. I decided to use these three sources of data so as to have a more holistic approach to the study of school dropout. Further, the three sets of participants provided an opportunity for triangulating the findings, an approach which increases credibility in the findings (see Patton, 1999, 2002). For this reason, I present the findings from these three sources simultaneously (see chapter five for a detailed explanation of how I integrated the data). I illustrate the interpretations of the data by presenting some excerpts from the participants' narratives. I have done this in order to authenticate for the readers the interpretations that I have drawn from the data set. I have used brackets “()” to enclose words which I have used to clarify participants' messages in the excerpts; square brackets “[]” have been used to enclose words indicating the participants' emotions; and ellipsis points “...” have been used where words used by participants deemed irrelevant have been omitted.

To identify the participants in this study, I have used numbers. In the case of dropouts and parents, I have also added the gender designation. For instance, the identification of a female dropout, number one would appear as: F/Dropout 1, while that of a male

participant with the same designation would appear as, M/Dropout 1. A female parent, number two would appear as: F/Parent 2, while that of a male parent of the same number would appear as, M/Parent 2. Gender was not a critical variable for teachers, thus I have identified teachers only by numbers; Teacher 1; Teacher 2, and so on. I have used this format of identifying participants in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

My main objective in this study was to find out the factors that influenced adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in a rural site of southern Zambia. To fulfil this objective, I addressed the following research questions:

1. How do societal cultural practices influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling?
2. How do the communities in which adolescents live influence the choices that they make about schooling?
3. What is the influence of family on the choices that adolescents make about schooling?
4. How do the schools influence the choices that adolescents make about schooling?

To substantiate the themes that emerged as factors which influenced adolescents to drop out of school, I present under each theme examples of excerpts from the interviews. In a few cases where a particular participant gave various perspectives about an issue, I have listed the individual perspectives from the individual. However, in the majority of instances where participants generally gave similar views, only examples of responses have been cited. In the next section, I present the sub-themes that emerged under the theme of cultural factors.

6.2. Cultural factors

Among cultural factors that were found to influence adolescents to drop out of school, three sub-themes as follows: initiation influences girls to drop out of school; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; and pregnancy as a route to marriage,

emerged. These factors were found to affect female dropouts more than they did the males.

6.2.1 Initiation influences girls to drop out of school

In the interviews and focus group discussions, female dropouts indicated that they experienced a conflict between what they were taught during the initiation rite and the requirements of formal schooling. They indicated that initiation tended to concentrate on teaching girls how to have sexual intercourse with their future husbands, a practice which encouraged a number of girls to get into early marriages and/or get pregnant. Of the five female dropouts who I interviewed, two of them had passed through the initiation rite. However, during the focus group discussion, all the female dropouts, including those who had not undergone initiation, having attended these ceremonies, indicated that initiation impacted negatively on schooling.

In the following excerpt, for instance, one of the two young women who passed through initiation gives an account of the sexual content that predominates the teaching given during the initiation rite. Here is how she puts it:

...They teach you everything you need to know about how to sleep with a man and how to make him happy- all bedroom details are given. All this happens to you while you are still a young girl, still going to school. They will also talk about how to cook, clean the house, but the main thing they concentrate on is sex. They pinch you on the thighs until you do it the way they want...The women teaching you how to have sex with a man will even lie down and demonstrate for you to watch and learn how you are supposed to wriggle when you are having sex with your husband. After they have demonstrated, they let you do it yourself and if you do it right, they will proceed to another lesson. If you do not do it right, they pinch you and make you repeat it until you get it right... (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, the participant gives an explanation of how she perceived the teaching given during initiation as focusing on teaching the young women some sex skills to prepare them for marriage. She explains the tenacity with which the older women instructing the initiate will focus on the sexual lessons until the initiate gets them right.

The second young woman who underwent initiation also gives her views about how she sees initiation as something that leads young girls who are still in school to shift their minds from formal schooling to marriage and/or motherhood. She explains:

...What I saw was that initiation sends girls to go and do things that married people do, while they are still in school and are far from thinking about getting married...Initiation does not make sense to people who are still in school, it would make sense if it was given to people who have left school and have no plans of going back to school. Making girls who are still in school pass through initiation encourages them to leave school. Almost all girls who pass through initiation end up in early marriages- soon after initiation they either get married or get pregnant (F/Dropout 4, Interview, August, 2006).

The preceding excerpt seems to tie well with the next excerpt from the first cited young woman. She explains how at graduation from initiation, the initiate is decorated with ornaments and presented to the public:

...When you come out of initiation, they decorate you so beautifully and you look beautiful because you spend a long time not doing anything- you become nice and rounded; your hands are soft because you do not do anything. On the day you come out, everybody in the village comes to watch you; they even give you some money and other gifts. As you sit there, men come and make such remarks as, "this one is mine, no matter what, I will marry her". Others even touch your face as they give you some money. Some men even go so far as to say, "Even if you are still at school, I want you, I will see you after"...A number of girls get married soon after coming out of initiation; they forget about school (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006).

Other participants who did not necessarily get initiated themselves, but had attended a number of initiation rites, expressed similar sentiments about initiation playing a role in luring young girls out of school prematurely. One participant for instance, explained during a focus group discussion:

According to my observation in this area, all the girls who got initiated have gotten pregnant, only those who went back to school after giving birth have completed school... (F/Dropout 5, Interview, August, 2006).

One of the participants makes an interesting analogy; she compares initiation to an advertising session:

... Nkolola (initiation) is very bad, it spoils girls. It exposes girls the same way we advertise tomatoes when they get ripe- it is as if men are told, "come and see, I have a girl here, she is ripe and ready" (F/Dropout 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In the above excerpt, the participant seems to use the metaphor of tomatoes to underscore the message that initiation focuses on preparing girls for marriage. This metaphor of tomatoes seems to tie well with what F/Dropout 2 above observes about what happens on the day the initiate graduates from initiation, namely that men are invited to come and "bid" for the initiate's hand in marriage.

On the other hand, the findings suggest that the female parents viewed initiation as an important rite of passage which girls who enter puberty needed to pass through for them to get admitted into society as fully fledged women. In the next excerpt, for instance, the parent indicates the important lessons that girls are taught during initiation:

Girls are put in initiation. There we tell them how to behave; we tell them that it is wrong to move around with men. We tell them when a man wants to marry you, he needs to come and show himself to your parents. We also teach them everything about how they need to behave in a home when they get married (F/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Another parent emphasises the importance of the female initiation rite:

...When a girl enters puberty, she is taught all the house chores; how to work in the fields, how to knit or sow. We also teach them things that they need to know about marriage. We tell them how to feed their husband, how to respect him, how to respect his relatives. She also has to know how to serve people food generally (F/Parent 2, Interview, August, 2006).

With regard to providing detail in the teaching that is given to girls during initiation, however, the parents seemed to exhibit some embarrassment. The embarrassment seems to get confirmed in the following excerpt where one of the parents who I interviewed kept interrupting herself with laughter and hesitation whenever she tried

to say something about the teaching given during initiation. At one point in the interview, I got the impression that the parent was going to say more, however, whenever she got to the point where she wanted to say more, she would freeze into hesitation while giggling to herself and looking down. The most that this parent managed to say was:

There are so many things [hesitates]. They (girls) are taught how they should live with a man when they get married. They are also told what to do... [stops while giggling and looking down] (F/Parent 4, Interview, August, 2006).

I interpreted the parents' reservations to give the content of the teaching given during initiation as emanating from the sensitive nature of the subject and the fact that I, the interviewer was male, young (young enough to have been their son), and of the same tribe as her. These dynamics may have made initiation taboo for the participants to discuss with me.

In this section I have presented findings indicating how the female dropouts viewed the female initiation rite as having a negative influence on formal schooling due to the teaching given during the rite which tended to run counter to the requirements of formal schooling. The dropouts indicated that by concentrating on teaching young women how to have sexual intercourse with their future husbands, initiation encourages the young women, most of whom are still in school at that time, to fall pregnant or get into early marriages. On the other hand, contrary to the views of the dropouts, the female parents viewed the female initiation rite as an important rite of passage which girls who enter puberty needed to pass through to be prepared for their roles as fully fledged members of society. In the next section, I present the findings on the theme: parents forcing their daughters into early marriages.

6.2.2 Parents forcing their daughters into early marriages

A number of perspectives were expressed by participants about this theme. Firstly, most dropouts indicated that it was common practice for parents in Haacizibe Village to force school going girls into marriage as soon as they entered puberty. The dropouts attributed this practice to the desire by their parents to get some wealth

through the lobola (dowry) paid by the suitor's family. In the Tonga culture, which is the culture that prevails in Haacizibe Village where I conducted this study, before a marriage takes place, the families involved (i.e. the family of the suitor and the family of the woman to be married), will come together to talk, among other things, about the lobola to be paid for the young woman. Lobola is predominantly paid in cattle; the family of the woman will charge anything from five to well over twenty animals, depending on the specific prevailing marriage customs which vary from area to area. In addition to animals, money may be used to settle preliminary agreements prior to the payment of the lobola.

Female dropouts indicated that sometimes parents went as far as receiving money in advance from suitors wishing to marry their daughters who were still in school. One participant explains:

We children want to learn but parents are the problem; often parents receive money from suitors while their daughters are still in school. Without you knowing anything, your parents will receive money from a suitor. This has happened to girls starting grade seven and eight. This in fact happened to a girl in my family; our parents received money from a suitor and spent it but the girl was still in school. That habit of parents giving their daughters to men happens a lot here and the most affected ones are the girls in grades seven, eight and nine. Once this has happened, parents force their daughter into marriage (F/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

From the tone that the participant uses in this excerpt, it seems that in a situation where parents decided to pull a girl out of school into marriage, the girl did not have any say in the matter; she just had to obey. The next excerpt seems to confirm the helplessness experienced by the young girls upon their parents' decision to marry them off at the expense of schooling:

Parents mislead us in leading us into marriage. When parents start enticing us into marriage, we are still naïve; we do not know anything about marriage, so we depend on what they tell us. Parents at that time are our thinkers, they are our heads and when they insist that we get married, we tend to say, "Well, there must be something good in marriage for the knowledgeable people (parents) to insist on it". Parents are really the ones who throw us into problems and suffering instead of them getting us out of there (F/Dropout 4, Interview, August, 2006).

The two preceding excerpts seem to underscore how much the girls who were forced into marriage at the expense of their schooling were at the mercy of the decisions made by their parents.

The extent of the tendency for parents in Haacizibe Village to force their daughters into early marriages seems to be put in even better light by the next participant. She narrates how her parents in conjunction with her elder sister forced her to get married, preventing her from going further in education. As the participant waited to proceed into the next grade, the man who her family had hand picked for her to get married to, started approaching her asking for her hand in marriage. She resisted the man knowing that she was supposed to continue with school. It was at that point of resistance that her elder sister, the mouth piece of her parents, told her in no uncertain terms, "...You are not going to school, this man is very serious; he is going to marry you" (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006). The participant explains the rest of her story:

... I could not say anything because you know, as a child when your parents have said something, you have no choice but to accept what they tell you. So I also accepted and got married to that man. I got married mainly because I thought since my parents were insisting on it, there would be something good out of it, but I still loved school. I got married really in order to do what my parents told me would make them and me happy (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006).

The narrative of the young woman just cited did not end there, she went further to relate how her parents rejected her when a few years later, she went back to them asking for their help so that she could go back to school considering that her husband, the man for whom she was forced to abandon school, had left her in preference for a younger second wife. She narrates:

...Even now I have lots of problems in my marriage; my husband has married a second wife, he spends most of the time with the second wife. He does not even come to see me and the children; I have to fend for the children and myself. I have to toil in the garden all the time to feed the four children we have. I am really suffering. I have told my parents about my problems and I have even suggested that I go back to school since my husband is a problem. When I told my parents this, their response made me to just forget about them completely; they told me, "since your husband is very unfaithful and promiscuous, it is possible that you are already infected with the AIDS virus and we would not like to waste our money sending you back to school because we will have no profit. You are maybe going to get sick even before you start

working". When I noticed that this was their position about me, I decided to completely forget about them. What I have seen is that my parents were only interested in the money and animals that were paid when I got married.

As can be seen from the above excerpt, F/Dropout 2 expresses her regret and disappointment about the decision made by her parents for her to get married at the expense of her school. At the same time, it seems there was nothing that the young woman could do about her helpless situation.

While being forced into early marriages was not common among boys, one of the male dropouts shared how he was forced to marry his girlfriend:

... my girlfriend spent a night at my house and her parents noticed her absence in the night. When she went back to her home the following morning, her parents chased her, they told her to go back to where she had been. That's how she was brought back to my house and we had no choice but to get married. After that, my parents sent the lobola to her parents and that's how we got married (M/Dropout 4, Interview, August, 2006).

These findings from the dropouts seem to tie well with the views of the teachers I interviewed. All the teachers indicated how the practice by parents in Haacizibe Village to force their daughters into early marriages had led a number of girls to prematurely leave school. Teachers, like dropouts attributed these forced marriages to parents' desire to get some wealth through the lobola paid when their daughters got married. In some of these cases, girls were married into polygamous marriages. One teacher explains this scenario:

... There was actually one case of a girl at this school, she was in grade eight, she never even got pregnant but her parents pushed her into marriage. She got married to a man who already had five wives, she became wife number six (Teacher 3, Interview, August, 2006).

A similar message seems to be communicated in the next excerpt:

...This year (2006), already one girl has gotten married, she was in grade eight- she never got pregnant, she just got married... (Teacher 4, Interview, August, 2006).

In the following excerpt, the message about early marriages seems to be made even stronger. The teacher adds another dimension namely that of young girls eloping with their boyfriends while they are still in school. Unlike parents, however, who seemed to lay the blame of eloping totally on the children, the teacher seems to suggest that parents were to blame:

... We have had cases where girls have gotten married as early as grade six. Without getting pregnant, they just decide to elope with their boyfriends and parents will not come to the school to report about this, you will just learn of it from people around. So as teachers we take it that parents are interested in the marriage of their daughters because they want to get something... (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, at a subtle level, the teacher seems to suggest that parents used eloping as a scapegoat for pushing their daughters into early marriage. This interpretation seems to be authenticated by an earlier cited excerpt where M/Dropout 4 indicated that he and his girlfriend were forced to get married after their parents discovered that they had spent a night together.

Parents also cited early marriages as one of the common factors that influenced adolescent girls to drop out of school. However, unlike what the dropouts and teachers indicated, parents seemed to lay the blame of early marriages on their daughters who opted to elope with their boyfriends at the expense of their school. The following were the typical responses by parents here:

... We just found out that our daughter had eloped with her boyfriend and that was the end, she got married and she is still married (F/Parent 3, Interview, August, 2006).

... All my three daughters got married the same way; they eloped with their boyfriends... (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Through the presentation of findings in this section, I have demonstrated how young women in Haacizibe Village were forced to get into early marriages by their parents at the expense of their schooling. The dropouts indicated as did the teachers that the driving force behind the practice of forcing school girls into early marriages was the parents' desire for wealth through the lobola paid when girls got married. Through

these findings, I have also shown how powerless the young women seemed to find themselves with regard to the decisions that their parents made for them to leave school for marriage. On the contrary, the parents seemed to lay the blame of school dropout due to early marriages on their daughters who decided to elope with their boyfriends. In the next section, I present the final theme among cultural school dropout factors.

6.2.3 Pregnancy as a route to marriage

This theme is closely related to the theme of forced marriages in that in a number of cases in this study, when a girl got pregnant, she had to marry the man who had impregnated her and that meant she could not continue with school. While male dropouts indicated that boys also sometimes were forced to marry the girl they had impregnated, the problem mostly affected girls. In the following excerpt, the participant relates how when she got pregnant, her parents forced her to get married:

When I got pregnant, my parents met with the parents of the man who made me pregnant and arranged for our marriage. I had ideas of continuing with school in spite of being pregnant but my parents were not keen on me doing that, so I got married (F/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

Through this excerpt, we again see a repetition of the expression of helplessness by girls regarding decisions made by their parents for them to leave school. The explanation by the following male dropout about what happens when a girl is impregnated in Haacizibe Village seems to shed further light:

In a number of cases when a girl is impregnated, her parents will chase her from their home so that she can move in with the man who has impregnated her. Whether the man is prepared to live with her or not, they bring her by force and leave her, that's it... (M/Dropout 1, Interview, August, 2006).

The excerpt below presents the rare scenario (as far as this study is concerned) where a boy also dropped out of school after impregnating a girl:

... When I impregnated my girlfriend, we were both still at school, my parents went to talk with the girl's parents once they became aware of the whole thing. Shortly after that, my parents paid for her and she was brought home as my wife (M/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

Teachers also reiterated the sentiments of the dropouts namely that when a school girl got pregnant, parents usually forced her to get married to the man who had impregnated her. To cite one teacher:

... some parents do not want their daughters to come back to school; once they fall pregnant, they quickly marry them off so that they can get some animals as lobola...(Teacher 3, Interview, August, 2006).

Another teacher makes a similar assertion:

...When these girls get pregnant, most of them get married and that is the end of their school (Teacher 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In view of the complaints raised by dropouts and teachers about the common practice by parents in rural areas to marry their daughters off once they fall pregnant, I asked the teachers how the government policy that now allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school had fared at their school. The general indication from the teachers' responses was that the policy had not been successful. As one teacher indicated:

Hu, Ya [hesitation], it has worked, for example, we had a girl who got pregnant in grade seven, she was allowed to come back to continue and she did manage to complete her grade nine. Unfortunately, she got pregnant again when she started grade 10. But the general experience is that even if they are called back, they still repeat the mistake (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, the teacher openly indicates that the policy that allows adolescent mothers back into school had yielded dismal results:

...this programme that allows girls to come back to school after having a child is not helping us at all in that since its inception, it has been pregnancy after pregnancy. The main reason why this happens is that the environment where these children live does not change even after they have experienced their first pregnancy (Teacher 2, Interview, August, 2006).

The issue of pregnancy being one of the common factors that led to school dropout among adolescent females also came up in the interviews with the parents. Some parents indicated that girls failed to continue with school following a pregnancy because they opted, out of their own “rebelliousness” to marry the men who impregnated them. In the following excerpt, for instance, the parent seems to portray himself as a victim of his daughters’ rebellious behaviour:

Eee, when I saw that my daughter was pregnant, I talked to her and told her that my desire was for her to go back to school once she delivered, but my daughter did not want that, she eloped.... All my three daughters got married the same way; they eloped with their boyfriends. What I discovered later was that boys eloped with my daughters because they were properly brought up—they did not want to lose them. I brought my daughters up so well; when they worked in the fields, everybody admired them (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, M/Parent 1 indicates that he had tried to send his daughters who got pregnant back to school, but had not succeeded because his daughters opted for marriage. This position taken by the parent seems to be an attempt to project the problem onto his daughters.

In the next excerpt, though quite subtly, the parent indicates that when a school girl got pregnant, the desired course of action was for her to get married. The rationale as exemplified in the excerpt was that parents needed to recover the money spent on the girl’s education by charging damages and lobola. To cite the parent:

When a boy impregnates a girl who is still at school, we first charge the boy the money spent on the girl’s education, then that’s when we come to the actual lobola. A school girl is not to be played with, she is very expensive (F/Parent 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In the preceding excerpt, F/Parent 5 introduces a new aspect and this is the penalty charged to the man who impregnates a girl. According to the Tonga custom, when a man impregnates a woman outside wedlock, he is charged a penalty fee that is referred to as “damages”. As the terminology suggests, damages are charged because the girl has become “damaged” through the pregnancy. Another parent’s account in the next excerpt seems to clarify why “damages” are charged when a girl gets pregnant outside wedlock:

Four of my girls dropped out of school, three of them because of falling pregnant. Once they had fallen pregnant, nothing could be done...we decided that we should find a way of getting something out of it- we had to get the boys who made them pregnant to pay so that we did not lose completely (M/Parent 2, Interview, August, 2006).

The findings from the dropouts, teachers, and parents in this section have indicated that pregnancy was one of the factors that led adolescent females, especially to drop out of school. Dropouts and teachers gave similar sentiments indicating that parents often married off their daughters to the men who impregnated them so that they could get some lobola. As a result of this practice, teachers indicated that the policy which now allows adolescent mothers to continue with school had not fared well in rural schools. On the other hand, parents seemed to indicate that their daughters left school following a pregnancy because they chose to elope with the men who made them pregnant. Looking at the accounts given by the dropouts and teachers, however, it seems likely that parents were merely denying responsibility for failing to support their daughters’ education. In the next section, I present the findings on how family and community influenced school dropout.

6.3 Family and community factors

A number of themes emerged here as factors which influenced adolescents to drop out of school: lack of role models; education is a waste of time; bad influence from peers; lack of parental involvement in their children’s education; and low socioeconomic status.

6.3.1 Lack of role models

Most dropouts indicated in individual interviews and focus group discussions that they did not feel encouraged to proceed to higher levels of education because there were no educated people in their families and in the communities where they lived who they could look up to for inspiration. The following two excerpts typify the responses that were given here:

...in many families there are no educated people who children can look up to for inspiration... (M/Dropout 4, Interview, August, 2006).

When there is one who is educated in the family, they will be able to help pave the way open for their young brothers and sisters (F/Dropout 7, Interview, August, 2006).

These two excerpts seem to suggest that the dropouts had resigned themselves to repeating the vicious cycle of illiteracy in their families and communities.

The inspirational role of role models was also underscored by the teachers. Teachers indicated that students, who came from families where other family members were educated, did better academically. To cite one of the teachers:

...mainly if you check in the classes we have here from grade one to seven, you find there are pupils who are doing very well, most of them come from families that are educated. There are those that do poorly, they usually do badly because there is nobody to push them (Teacher 5, Interview, August, 2006).

According to Teacher 5, it seems apart from being good role models to students, educated parents and siblings also provided support to students by encouraging them to be committed in their pursuit of education. Another teacher reiterated the importance of family role models:

If parents are educated, it is positive because they understand the importance of school. This becomes even more where a family has family members working in town- those working become role models (Teacher 3, Interview, August, 2006).

Parents in this study also seemed to agree with the views of the dropouts and teachers that lack of educated role models in families and communities had a negative impact on students' pursuit of education. To cite one parent:

In this community there are no inspiring people except school teachers, but it is very unlikely that children will get inspired by teachers' lives because teachers' lives are of a low standard. Teachers live like villagers (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

M/Parent 1 in this excerpt seems to indicate that young people are not merely inspired by the education levels reached by their significant others, but more so by the improvements in the standard of living brought about by that education. In the next excerpt, F/Parent 5 also cites the lack of role models as one of the factors that led students to drop out of school, however, she also alludes to the influence of "bad role models" who inspire the young people in a negative way. She indicates:

In a lot of families there are no educated people to look up to. Children do not know any other life outside their villages. For girls, the moment breasts begin to show, all they want is to get married- that is the kind of life they admire. A lot of them here do not know what it means to live in town, they have no idea. Because of this ignorance about the better life that can be brought about by education, a lot of boys and girls do not have any school aspirations; they are in total darkness (F/Parent 5, Interview, August, 2006).

Due to the uninspiring conditions of the village, as F/Parent 5 indicates in the above excerpt, she devised a plan to inspire the young people she kept:

I took my nieces to town to visit my brothers so that they could see the beautiful life that is brought about by education. For the other families that do not have any relatives working in towns, this would be difficult, unless they get inspired by their friends who have seen how educated people live in towns.

This brings me to the next theme which is closely related to the theme of lack of role models.

6.3.2 Education is a waste of time

A number of dropouts indicated that they were not encouraged to complete their schooling because education did not seem to improve the lives of those people who had completed school. Here the earlier complaint by participants about lack of role models seems to have been clarified in that, as I indicated above, dropouts were looking for educational inspiration not just in terms of the educational levels reached, but more so in the improvement in the quality of life brought about by that education. As one dropout indicated:

A lot of educated people in this community do not have anything; in fact, in a lot of cases the uneducated are leading better lives than those who are educated. This has made a lot of parents stop applying themselves in the education of their children (M/Dropout 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, the dropout seems to look down on education as a means of improving people's lives. The next excerpt from F/Dropout 4 seems to amplify the message in the previous excerpt:

There are very few people who have completed school and have jobs; a good number have completed grade twelve but have no jobs. As a result of people who completed school not finding employment, those who are still in school do not get motivated to complete school- they do not see the point. If those who complete school could have good jobs, students in schools would be attracted to aspire after their status (F/Dropout 4, Interview, August, 2006).

In relation to the theme of education not making any difference in the lives of those who went through it, the teachers in this study indicated that the syllabi that were offered in schools were too academic- they did not have much relevance to the life of students in the families and communities where they lived. In view of this, the teachers suggested that the school syllabi needed to include a number of practical subjects which would give students some skills which they could easily apply in the communities. One teacher put it this way:

Children in this school need to be taught life skills but due to being understaffed, these subjects are not taught. These subjects would be of so much value to the children and I think they would be more interested in school. There is a lot of timbre around this area which can be cut to make all

kinds of things like stools. As it is now, children who drop out of school are just academic dropouts; they have no skills which they can use in the community (Teacher 4, Interview, August, 2006).

Apart from advocating for the introduction of practical subjects in schools, Teacher 4 in the above excerpt seems to indicate that practical subjects would be a good way of equipping the students who drop out, with life skills. In the next excerpt, the teacher seems to subtly indicate that there was a tendency among students to shun academic subjects in preference for more practical ones:

We need to bring in more practical subjects like industrial arts. Home economics is already there and is running very well. These subjects would motivate the children... (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, the teacher seems to make the message even clearer by using a metaphor demonstrating how detached some school subjects were from the life in the communities where students lived:

Practical subjects are living subjects because students can see and apply what they learn. In other subjects, the lessons are a bit far from reality. For example, in Geography, students learn about the “prairies” but they have never seen them. Our education tends to be a bit too academic (Teacher 3, Interview, August, 2006).

All parents in this study echoed what dropouts said about not seeing any need for children to progress to high levels in education since there was no improvement in the lives of people who persisted and completed school. To cite one parent:

The main reason why children do not apply themselves in school is that they see that even those who have completed school have no jobs and their lives are not any better. So those that are still in school do not see any point of continuing with school- it becomes a waste of time to them (F/Parent 3, Interview, August, 2006).

While in the above excerpt F/Parent 3 indicates the lack of benefit from education, she also seems to project the problem of school dropout to the children. Here there seems to be passing of blame between parents and children, in that, as indicated by M/Dropout 5 cited earlier, parents were the ones who lost the interest to sponsor their children to school.

In the next excerpt, the parent seems to also project the problem of school dropout on to the children:

... they (children) fail to see any point in continuing with school, the reason is that there are some people who have completed grade 12 but do not have jobs, they just sit at home, so children do not see any point in going to school (M/Parent 4, Interview, August, 2006).

In the two previous sections, I have presented findings showing how all three categories of participants viewed school dropout as being influenced by the lack of role models in families and in communities who could inspire the young people to pursue education. Further, the participants indicated that school dropout was linked to the fact that education did not seem to make any difference in the lives of those people who got educated. Thus, it seems the dropouts and parents had lost faith in education being a means of attaining a higher social stratum. In line with the observations made by dropouts and parents, teachers indicated that if the school syllabi offered in schools had more practical subjects which students would apply in the communities where they lived, education might have been more attractive to students. In the next section, I present findings on how peer pressure influenced school dropout.

6.3.3 Bad influence from peers

Peer pressure was another theme that emerged as influencing school dropout. Dropouts indicated that young people got swayed away from school due to indulging in unwanted activities such as drinking, smoking, sexual activities, and others which their peers lure them into. The following two excerpts typify the responses that were given here:

Girls mostly roam around with boys, even those who are still at school, they do not want to read; most of the time they are at the market roaming about.... Most boys also drink beer and a good number of these are still in school (F/Dropout 5, Interview, August, 2006).

Girls and boys do all sorts of horrible things like drinking beer, stealing. Some do other disgusting things like chasing after people's wives (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006).

What seems interesting about these two excerpts is that the participants seemed to speak about peer pressure in a detached manner; it is almost as if they themselves were never affected by peer pressure.

Teachers also cited peer pressure as one of the major factors that contributed to school dropout. One teacher, for instance, indicated:

Those (students) who drop out are those who involve themselves in such activities as drinking beer and smoking and this mainly affects boys. On the side of girls, they involve themselves in activities with boys- they start running about with boys (Teacher 5, Interview, August, 2006).

As indicated by Teacher 5 in the above excerpt, it seems peer involvement in illegal activities was a precursor to dropping out of school. The next excerpt addresses peer pressure very subtly, however, in addition, it seems to reiterate the teachers' view that problem behaviours were the major indicators of students who were on the trajectory of dropping out:

Usually, I will start with girls, you find that girls are truant and do not participate as much in class. Boys have bad conduct; they get violent to their peers, they even become rude in their responses to teachers (Teacher 4, Interview, August, 2006).

The message of peer influences being linked to school dropout was also expressed by parents. All the parents indicated that a number of children left school due to being influenced into doing illegal activities by their peers. As one parent indicated:

Children are a problem when they meet their peers; they do all sorts of dirty things. We try to advise them but they are always running around going to concerts to dance. That is what wastes their time (F/Parent 2, Interview, August, 2006).

Another parent observed:

They (children) cheat one another and a lot of them are cheated- there is peer pressure and parents have no power (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

What also seems to come out of these excerpts is that parents were at their wits end as far as controlling the influences of peer pressure on their children was concerned.

Largely, a similar message is contained in the following excerpt:

Girls run around with boys and as a result they get pregnant. For boys it is general pleasures; they engage in beer drinking, smoking to make themselves happy (M/Parent 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In this section, I have presented findings which have indicated how the participants viewed peer pressure as one of the factors that led adolescents to drop out of school. The findings have indicated that peer pressure was one of the indicators that a student was about to drop out of school. Therefore, in that sense, students' gravitation toward peer influences appeared to be an indicator that a student was getting detached from school. In the next section, I present the theme of lack of parental involvement in the education of their children.

6.3.4 Lack of parental involvement in children's education

Dropouts cited lack of parental support in their children's pursuit of education as one of the factors that contributed to young people dropping out of school. According to the dropouts, lack of parental support was manifested through parents overloading their children with house chores which left them with no or little time to study. Further, there was an indication by the dropouts that parents did not bother to push or urge their children to pursue education. In addition to that, dropouts indicated that their parents were more interested in teaching their children how to generate income and survive in the community. To cite one dropout:

Parents want their children to do what they (parents) do; if they are farmers, they will want their children to be farmers as well. Because of this, parents do not really push their children into school and the children also tend to follow the line of their parents (M/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, the participant indicates that the allocation of duties at home by parents did not permit girls to study or revise their work at home. This excerpt seems to suggest some gender role stereotyping in the way duties were allocated:

Girls usually do not have time to do their school work at home because they get home from school at 5pm. When they get home, they have to start cooking, after that, they have to do the dishes and then sweep the house. You could only study late at night when you were already very tired (F/Dropout 2, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, M/Dropout 1 indicates that his father had a choice whether to send him to school or keep him at home so that he could help with the farming duties:

...My father wanted me to manage things on the farm since I was the only one who could do that at the time. Because of this, my father was reluctant to find me a place in school (M/Dropout 1, Interview, August, 2006).

All the teachers reiterated the dropouts' message of parents involving their children in chores at home at the expense of schooling. To cite some of the teachers' responses:

... you see, what happens in this area is that there is dipping of animals, mainly cattle and you find on those days, boys are given the responsibility of taking animals for dipping. This activity plus others, make children miss a lot of school work... (Teacher 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In rural areas when parents are rich, it becomes a negative factor to the education of their children. The type of wealth that is in villages requires the presence of a child at home to take care of it and manage it. For example, animals have to be managed by the children... (Teacher 2, Interview, August, 2006).

In the two preceding excerpts, the teachers seem to indicate that the parents gave the home chores precedence over schooling.

Teachers also seemed to complain about parents not complementing their efforts in ensuring that students attended school. As one teacher observed:

...There is for example, a family nearby here where all the boys have dropped out and are working on the farms and parents of these boys are just quiet about it... (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Teacher 1 seems to suggest in this excerpt that parents did not care whether their children attended school or not.

The next excerpt further underscores the message of parents' indifference to their children's schooling:

A lot of times children stay out of school for one week, even two weeks and parents will not do anything (Teacher 4, Interview, August, 2006).

The teachers' complaints about the lack of support from parents seem appropriately summarized in the following excerpt :

Our parents feel school is like digging unconnected holes in the garden; you dig one hole here today, you dig another one there tomorrow. Parents do not know that school requires continuation and connectivity in the material being learnt. Due to this lack of understanding, parents pull their children out of school anytime they feel like; to them it does not matter. Students need to be consistent, they need to persevere... Parents sometimes become our enemies because we want our students to be consistent in their attendance of school... (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Parents also seemed to indicate that they did not have much interaction with teachers about their children's education except when they were summoned by teachers to attend to some problems faced by their children as in the following excerpts :

Yes, I used to go to see the teachers. One of my children in fact was doing well in class but teachers used to complain that he liked fighting a lot at school. Teachers used to tell us to sit the boy down to advise him (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Teachers write us letters when our children are not doing so well at school and we go to see them (M/Parent 3, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, the parent indicates that the only time that he used to visit the school attended by his child was when there were school meetings :

I used to go during meetings (M/Parent 4, Interview, August, 2006).

The findings in this section have indicated that participants viewed lack of parents' involvement in their children's education as one of the factors that led to school dropout. The dropouts indicated that their parents mostly involved them in home chores at the expense of schooling. Teachers also indicated that parents did not complement their efforts in ensuring that students were consistent in their school attendance. Parents indicated that the only time that they collaborated with teachers was when they were summoned to attend to their children's disciplinary problems or to attend school meetings. In the next section I present the findings on the theme of low socioeconomic status.

6.3.5 Low socioeconomic status

Finally, the dropouts indicated that they found it difficult to continue with schooling due to economic constraints in their families. The following excerpt from F/Dropout 3's narrative seems to vivify the levels of poverty in Haacizibe Village:

The way we live especially us women, survival is through selling at the market. This is the kind of life I have always led; even when I was a young girl, I used to all the time go to the market to sell things... I would go in the bush to dig lusala (some edible roots that can be cooked as relish) and sell them at the market. Sometimes I would be sent to sell fresh milk after the cows had been milked. That has been my life (F/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

In the following excerpt, the participant narrates how he tried to sponsor himself in school, however, when there were too many things to pay for, he eventually left school:

I stopped because my mother could not afford to pay my school fees, my father died. To get where I got, I used to grow and sell vegetables at the market. As time went on, however, it became increasingly difficult for me. Eventually, I just decided to stop school. When I stopped school, I went to work on the farms; I worked for one of these white farmers who just came from Zimbabwe (M/Dropout 5, Interview, August, 2006).

Teachers also indicated that poverty was one of the major contributing factors to students leaving school prematurely. All the teachers indicated that as a result of the

high poverty levels in the village, a number of students were engaged in income generating activities which invariably drew them out of school. To cite one teacher:

...There are a lot of things which young people sell at the market to get some money for grinding maize, buying soap and other things. Such businesses attract a lot of young people. If you went to the market even right now, you would see that some of these children are as young as 12 years old and are still in school (Teacher 5, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, Teacher 5 explicitly indicates that school going children have to get involved in raising some income to help provide the family requirements. The next excerpt from Teacher 1's narrative conveys a similar message:

Three quarters of the community in which we are here is in poverty. You find that most children will run to the market to do a bit of business to survive (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

In the following extract, the teacher gets more specific about the problem that plagued Bbombo Basic School due to poverty:

You know, on the western side of our school, we have a chain of farms. All these farms are owned by white farmers from Zimbabwe. When these farmers came from Zimbabwe, they attracted a lot of our children especially boys to the extent that the school nearly grounded to a halt until we raised a complaint... (Teacher 2, Interview, August, 2006).

The assertions of the teacher regarding how the farm jobs lured students out of school seem to be in agreement with what M/Dropout 5, referred to above, observed about him leaving school in order to work on the farm owned by a Zimbabwean white farmer.

Parents also cited poverty as one of the reason why students dropped out of school. For example, in the following excerpt the parent categorically states his inability to pay for his son:

I could not pay for him at school; I have totally nothing (M/Parent 4, Interview, August, 2006).

In the next excerpt, the parent makes an interesting observation regarding poverty and how it hindered parents to support their children not just in school, but generally:

When you see that you will not manage to fulfil all the needs of your children, the best thing to do is to give them money to start a business so that they can fend for themselves (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Through this excerpt, the parent seems to suggest that parents sometimes encouraged their children to engage in income generating activities so that they could ease the burden of parents having to provide support (which might include providing school requirements) for their children. M/Parent 1's narrative did not stop there; he further narrated how he regretted the "inevitable" practice of parents pushing their children into income generating activities:

The businesses which these children engage in ruin their prospects for school. As parents we are to blame for this because often we are the ones that give these children the capital to start these business ventures. What has brought this about is poverty. We as parents have nothing, and our animals have died of diseases. As parents we have no choice but to push our children in fire. Because of these businesses, our daughters end up meeting men with cars who promise them money and in a lot of cases, we have lost our girls that way.

Through this excerpt, M/Parent 1 seems to express "helpless regret" about the practice of involving school going children in raising income for the family.

In the next excerpt, the parent makes a statement which seems appropriate to sum up the limitations that parents faced in sending their children to school as a result of poverty:

Unless we parents have food and money, only then can we have the willingness to educate our children (M/Parent 2, Interview, August, 2006).

The findings in this section have indicated that school dropout was linked to the high poverty levels in Haacizibe Village. Due to poverty, a number of school going children had to be involved in income generating activities to supplement the usually limited family incomes. These activities invariably led a number of young people to

drop out of school. In the next section, I present the themes relating to how the school environment contributed to school dropout.

6.4 School Factors

In this section I present findings indicating how the school environment led to school dropout. Two themes as follows: no help from teachers; and lack of students' support system in school emerged here.

6.4.1 No help from teachers

Regarding what went on at Bbombo Basic which the dropouts attended, there was a general indication by the dropouts that the school did not give them the required individualized attention during lessons. The dropouts also indicated that teachers did not give them any remedial lessons to attend to the areas where they might have needed extra help. According to one dropout:

Teachers used to teach us as a group, they never used to give us any individualized attention to find out what problems each one of us was facing. They never even used to check our note books... The only teacher who would bother about my work, for instance, was the one who was married to my aunt; he would check my books at home, otherwise at school, there was nothing like that (F/Dropout 2, Interview, July, 2007).

F/Dropout 2 in the above excerpt seems to indicate that teachers were not concerned about whether the students applied themselves to what was being taught or not. It was almost as if students had to struggle on their own to make sense of the group lessons that teachers gave. In the next excerpt, M/Dropout 3 speaks of teachers failing to give remedial lessons:

...there never used to be any remedial lessons. If a student did not understand during class time that would be the end- there would be no lessons outside normal class time (M/Dropout 3, Interview, July, 2007).

All the teachers seemed to acknowledge their inability to attend to the individual needs of the students. Teachers attributed their inability to give students

individualised attention to the large numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. To cite one teacher:

...at this school there are very few of us. A lot of children get discouraged because they go for a long time without having individualised attention from a teacher. Our classes are abnormally large; they mostly range from 69 to 81 pupils, as you can see from the chart on the wall. To be able to cope with these large numbers, what teachers do is, they alternate the marking of books; today they mark books for this group, tomorrow they mark books for the other group... (Teacher 2, Interview, August, 2006).

Teacher 2 in the above excerpt seems to acknowledge that some students lost the motivation to learn as a result of not getting the individual attention that they needed from teachers.

In the next excerpt, Teacher 4 also cites overcrowded classrooms as one of the impediments to having effective teaching- learning interaction between teachers and students. In addition to difficulties with giving students some individualised attention, the teacher also points out the difficulties with regard to marking:

We have large classes; some even go up to 70 pupils. When it comes to marking, you just have to mark and forgo other things, because you cannot mark books for half the class so you just have to mark and forgo something else. Maybe instead of giving them work in a particular period, you spend it marking (Teacher 4, Interview, August, 2006).

Yet another teacher underscored the limitations emanating from having large classes:

...in a way you are able to achieve the objectives of the lessons but not to the fullest because even when it comes to assessing the kids, it becomes very difficult, unless you give a class test. Like me I like giving them class exercises but again it is very difficult to cover all areas in those class exercises (Teacher 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Teacher 1 in the above excerpt links the problem of large classes to the difficulties that teachers had carrying out assessment and evaluation as frequently and as comprehensively as they were supposed to.

Parents in this study did not say much about the specifics of what went on in the teaching-learning process between students and teachers. However, it seems that parents were generally dissatisfied about the quality of teaching that teachers gave their children. According to one parent :

Teachers also need to apply themselves. These days teachers are only interested in getting to the end of the month so that they can get their pay- the teaching has become devalued (M/Parent 3, Interview, August, 2006).

M/Parent 3 seems to indicate that the teaching standards had gone down because teachers only taught for the love of the money and not because they were passionate about the job. In the next excerpt, M/Parent 1 seems to get even more specific about the low quality of the present day teaching given to students :

They (children) think because we only went up to grade 7 and they went up to grade 9, they are so educated, but in actual fact I speak better English than them and I can write a letter in English which these grade 9s cannot do (M/Parent 1, Interview, August, 2006).

Due to the poor educational standards in schools, F/Parent 4 in the next excerpt makes an appeal for government intervention :

I would like to ask the government to devise a system whereby before progressing to higher grades, children will be allowed to know how to deal with the lessons from the lower grades. The way it is children progress even before mastering lessons in the lower grades and this is not motivating at all (F/Parent 4, Interview, August, 2006).

In this excerpt, F/Parent 4 seems to indicate that students just progressed through the school system without mastering the lessons that they were given at various levels. The message in this excerpt seems to tie well with the dropouts' and teachers' observation that teachers did not have time to remedy students' individual problems due to constraints brought about by large numbers of students.

In this section I have presented findings showing how the lack of individual help for students by teachers influenced school dropout. The dropouts indicated that teachers taught them in a group and did not take time to attend to their individual needs. Teachers attributed their inability to attend to students' individual needs to the large numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. While not commenting on

the specific interaction that took place between teachers and students, parents indicated that the education standards in schools had gone down due to teachers not applying themselves fully in their jobs. Thus, all the three categories of research participants seemed to agree that students' educational needs were not adequately seen to. In the next section, I present the findings on how the theme of lack of students' support system in school influenced school dropout.

6.4.2 Lack of students' support system in school

One of the questions that I asked the dropouts was how the school that they attended responded to their personal problems such as motivational problems, social problems in school and outside. All the 10 dropouts indicated ignorance of the existence of any department in the school where students could take such problems. The dropouts, as exemplified in the two responses below, seemed rather surprised at the prospect of having a department in the school which could attend to students' problems:

There was no such office in the school where I was (F/Dropout 7, Interview, August, 2006).

At my school? There was nothing like that (M/Dropout 3, Interview, August, 2006).

The teachers also indicated that Bbombo Basic School did not have a well functioning students' support system in the school which attended to the well-being of students:

...we have a counsellor in the school although he does not yet have an office to operate from- he operates from this, my office (Deputy Headmistress's office)... I wouldn't say the guidance and counselling department is very active. It is not yet popular- students do not yet know the use of this service (Teacher 2, Interview, August, 2006).

Teacher 2 in the above excerpt indicates how ineffective the students' support department was due to lack of office space. This finding seems to tie well with the observations made earlier by the dropouts namely that they never heard of a students' support department when they were at school.

Through the presentation of the findings in this section, I have shown that the school that the dropouts attended did not have any students' support department where students could go for support on a number of issues that challenged them. The teachers of the school also confirmed that the students' support department was not functional due to lack of office space. In the next section, I draw a conclusion from all the findings that I have presented in this chapter.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the findings that emerged from this study. I categorized the findings into three main themes indicating the factors that influenced adolescents to drop out of school. These themes were: cultural factors; family and community factors, and school factors. With regard to the cultural factors, dropouts indicated that the practice of the female initiation rite which focused on teaching girls their marriage and motherhood roles, encouraged girls to drop out of school. On the other hand, parents seemed to view the female initiation rite as a necessary practice that taught girls what they needed to know to be fully integrated into society. With regard to the other two themes among cultural factors, dropouts and teachers indicated that a number of adolescents left school prematurely due to being forced into early marriages by their parents. Consequently, teachers indicated that the policy which allows adolescent mothers to continue with school had not yielded good results. Both the dropouts and teachers indicated that the motive for the practice of forcing girls into early marriages was the parents' desire for lobola. Parents on the other hand seemed to blame school dropout due to early marriages on their daughters who decided to elope with their boyfriends.

Among the family and community school dropout factors, there seemed to be consensus among all three categories of participants that lack of role models to inspire young people in school, education not making any difference in people's lives, bad influence from peers, lack of parental support in the education of their children, and low socioeconomic status influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

In relation to how the school influenced school dropout, the dropouts indicated that they did not get any individual help from teachers on a number of academic challenges which they faced- teachers dealt with them in a group. The teachers attributed their inability to attend to students' individual problems to the big numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. While not being cognizant of the interaction that went on between teachers and students in the classroom, parents indicated a general decline in the teaching standards in schools due to teachers' lack of commitment to teaching. Finally, dropouts and teachers indicated that students' academic and/or non-academic challenges were not attended to due to lack of a well functioning students' support system in the school. In the next chapter, I discuss how themes under cultural factors influenced school dropout.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF CULTURAL FACTORS

7.1 Introduction

This dissertation has three chapters; chapters seven, eight, and nine, in which I discuss the findings. In all these chapters, in line with the holistic approach that I have used, I discuss the findings from dropouts, parents, and teachers simultaneously. Earlier studies that have used triangulation in IPA research have employed a similar integrative approach (see Raphael et al., 2006; Reid et al., 2009; Dean et al., 2005).

In this first discussion chapter, I focus on discussing themes relating to how cultural practices influenced adolescents to drop out of school. In line with the integrative approach as I have already indicated, I pick one theme at a time and discuss it across the three sets of research participants simultaneously. Through this format of discussion, I bring out the similarities and/or variations regarding the dropouts', teachers', and parents' perspectives on the various aspects of school dropout. Four questions guided this study, however, this segment of the discussion focuses on addressing the first question which sought to find out how societal cultural practices influenced the choices that adolescents made about schooling.

7.2 Cultural factors

Three sub-themes emerged here as follows: initiation influences girls to drop out of school; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; and pregnancy as a route to marriage.

7.2.1 Initiation influences girls to drop out of school

The female dropouts in this study indicated in the interviews and focus group discussion that the female initiation rite tended to encourage school going girls to prematurely leave school in preference for marriage. The participants attributed this to the emphasis of the initiation rite on teaching marriage and motherhood roles. Among the Tonga speaking people as elsewhere in most other Zambian tribes, the female initiation rite is performed as a rite of passage to mark the transitioning of a girl from childhood into adulthood. The concept of rite of passage was developed by Van Gennep in 1908 (Van Gennep, 1960). The concept comprises two meanings. Firstly, it relates to the psychological transformation that an initiate experiences during the transition. Secondly, it signifies the changes that take place in the duties that the initiate is expected to perform in society upon entering puberty (Brown, 1963, 1970).

According to Van Gennep (1960), rites of passage comprise the following three stages: separation, transition, and reincorporation. During the separation stage as Van Gennep argues, the initiate is secluded from the rest of society to undergo instruction in preparation for her new identity and new set of roles. During the second stage, the transition stage, the initiate is given the detailed teaching of the requirements of the new phase that she has entered. Finally, at the reincorporation stage, the initiate having been transformed, is reintroduced back into society. At this point, the initiate assumes a transformed identity. Some cultures accompany the reincorporation stage with outward physical signs such as tattoos, special clothes, rings, to signify the new status that the initiate has attained (Habel, O'Donoghue & Maddox, 1993).

The female initiation rite, which a considerable portion of this section of the discussion focuses on, is one example of a rite of passage where the initiate experiences transformational processes as outlined by Van Gennep (1960). Among the Tonga speaking people, the initiation rite also marks the transition by the initiate from childhood into womanhood. As the female parents I interviewed indicated, the initiation rite serves as a platform where the now grown up girl is taught what is expected of her in society. For this reason, the parents viewed the initiation rite as an important step in the life of girls. As exemplified in the assertions of F/Parent 1 and

F/Parent 2, apart from being an outward symbol marking the coming of age of a girl, initiation prepares the young women for their marriage roles. F/Parent 2 seems to underscore this when she says, "...We teach them (initiates) things that they need to know about marriage. We tell them how to feed their husband, how to respect him, how to respect his relatives..."

Thus, the initiation rite among the Tonga speaking people seems to be centred on preparing young women for their marriage roles. Studies on initiation rites in other Zambian tribes seem to confirm these findings from my study. In a study conducted among the Bemba speaking people of northern Zambia, for instance, Richards (1956) observes that the initiation rite centres on teaching girls roles of marriage and motherhood. More than 60 years later, in 1995, Rasing conducted similar studies in the villages where Richards had conducted her study and she confirmed that the female initiation rite was still being practiced the way Richards had found it (Rasing, 2001). In both these studies, Richards (1956) and Rasing (2001) describe in detail the teaching given to the initiates on how to sexually satisfy their future husbands and how to fulfil their other roles as wives and mothers.

Studies in other parts of Africa (e.g. Milubi, 2000) also confirm that the focus of female initiation rites is on preparing young women for their marriage and motherhood roles. My first task therefore is to analyse and discuss the social function of the female initiation rite and how it influences girls' perception of themselves vis-à-vis formal schooling.

All the five female dropouts who I interviewed in this study described their experiences of the female initiation rite as encouraging young women to engage in early sexual activities which often resulted in early marriages and pregnancies, both of which invariably led to school dropout. What girls are taught during the ceremony as participants' testimonies showed, largely focuses on sharpening their sexual prowess so as to make their future husbands happy. F/Dropout 2, for instance, gave a detailed narrative of the extent to which the initiation instructors will emphasize the sexual intercourse aspect. These initiation instructors make demonstrations of how to properly perform the sexual act and demand no less from the initiate.

Earlier studies conducted on initiation rites in Zambia (see Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001) corroborate these findings. One thing that strikes me about these initiation rites is that, since more than six decades ago, as shown in Rasing's (2001) study, the focus of the teaching during initiation rites seems to have remained the same to date. The continuity of the rite for all these years with the same finesse seems to suggest how deeply entrenched the practice is in traditional societies. This therefore seems to suggest that in traditional Zambian societies, and in particular in the Tonga traditional society, female initiation rites have a considerable amount of influence in shaping the young women's sense of identity.

To further elucidate the impact of the female initiation rite on the identity formation of girls and women in general, let me re-visit Van Gennep's (1960) three stages involved in rites of passage in general and relate them specifically to the female initiation rite. These stages are: separation, transition, and reincorporation. With regard to the female initiation rite, the young woman who comes of age is first secluded (separation stage) from the rest of society and put into a confined place where the teaching takes place. The physical removal of the young woman from the rest of the people seems to symbolically indicate how the young woman is supposed to discard the "old self" that she was before coming of age.

After the separation stage, the transition stage where the initiate gets instructed in the responsibilities of her new roles, follows. In other words, with the teaching of new roles and responsibilities thereof, a new identity is conferred upon the young woman who comes of age. She at this stage seems to receive a new pair of lenses through which she must view herself and the rest of society from then on. This argument seems to resonate with what Cooley, cited in Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) says namely that the acquired identity becomes the looking-glass through which one sees oneself. For the Tonga speaking people, this new identity which is conferred upon the young woman at initiation, requires her to embrace her marriage and motherhood roles as a fully fledged woman. In relation to this argument, the female dropouts in this study observed that a number of young women who are initiated usually end up getting married or falling pregnant soon after graduating from initiation. F/Dropout 4, for instance, expresses her views about initiation contributing to school dropout,

“...initiation sends girls to go and do things that married people do while they are still in school and are far from thinking about getting married...” By using this expression, the participant seems to suggest that initiation makes girls want to put the sex, marriage, and motherhood lessons that they are taught during initiation into practice. This as the participant suggests, tends to lure the young girls out of school. F/Dropout 5 made a similar observation, “According to my observation in this area, all the girls who got initiated have gotten pregnant...”

One of the probable explanations to the observations made by the participants about initiates getting married or falling pregnant soon after getting initiated, it seems, is the new identity that is conferred on them during initiation. As (Brown, 1963, 1970) argues, during the transition stage, the initiate acquires a new identity through the two processes of change that take place. Firstly, the initiate undergoes a psychological transformation whereby she begins to see herself and others in different light. Secondly, the initiate undergoes social transformation which makes her embrace the new roles that she now has to fulfil in society. Thus, for the young women who embrace their marriage and motherhood roles soon after graduating from initiation, the influence to drop out of school seems to come from this transformation that they experience through initiation.

The final stage in the female initiation rite is the reincorporation stage. During this stage as Van Gennep (1960) argues, the initiate is re-admitted into society with a new identity, having crossed the threshold from childhood into womanhood. As indicated by the participants, this final stage in the initiation process is marked by celebrations where the initiate is “showcased” before the whole community. F/Dropout 2 seems to encapsulate the showcasing of the initiate well in the line where she says, “...when you come out of initiation, they decorate you so beautifully...” The decoration of the initiate at graduation thus seems to be symbolic of the transformation that the initiate has gone through- just as she stands out with her beauty, so too she is different from the novices who have not yet been initiated.

The initiation rite graduation ceremony thus is critical to the whole community in that it symbolizes the “re-birth” of the initiate. She entered the initiation rite as a “novice”,

but she re-emerges as an “expert”, ready to take on the challenges of her new roles and responsibilities as a fully fledged woman. It seems therefore, the celebrations that take place when the initiate is reincorporated into society are comparable to the celebrations that take place when a new life enters the world. Ironically though, the female dropouts in this study indicated that the celebrations that take place when an initiate graduates from initiation tend to be sexually objectifying to the young woman. In the next section therefore, I turn to the issues of sexual objectification of women in the female initiation rite as perceived by the female dropouts in this study.

7.2.1.1 Sexual objectification in the female initiation rite

The dropouts indicated in this study that the teaching given during initiation tends to sexually objectify the initiates by focusing on teaching them how to sexually satisfy their future husbands. F/Dropout 2, for instance, observed that in their effort to make the young woman proficient in how to have sexual intercourse with her future husband, the initiation instructors would leave no stone unturned. She pointed out:

...The women teaching you how to have sex with a man will even lie down and demonstrate for you to watch and learn how you are supposed to wriggle when you are having sex with your husband. After they have demonstrated, they let you do it yourself and if you do it right, they will proceed to another lesson. If you do not do it right, they pinch you and make you repeat it until you get it right...

As can be seen from the above excerpt, the participant seems to adopt a tone of complaint about the sexual teaching given during initiation. She, in fact, seems to equate the whole teaching to a torturous experience where the initiate is repeatedly “pinched” until she does the correct thing. By the time the ceremony is over, the initiate, it seems, is expected to be proficient in giving her future husband the ultimate sexual pleasure. This in itself seems to be an act of sexual objectification. Bartky cited in Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) defines sexual objectification as follows:

Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman’s body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her (p. 175).

What strikes me in all this teaching given to initiates about how to have sexual intercourse is that the initiates seem to only be taught how to be proficient in giving satisfaction to men; no concern, it seems, is given to how they themselves should attain their own sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Similar sexual objectification seems to be manifested in female genital mutilation (FGM), an important aspect of female initiation which is, however, not practiced in Zambia. I refer to FGM here in order to shed further light on the sexual objectification issues that came out of this study.

The reasons for carrying out FGM are not well understood, however, among other things, the rationale for the practice includes beliefs that female genital mutilation enhances the sexual performance of a man (ACOG, 1999). In addition, Toubia (1999) argues that FGM helps curb promiscuity and fornication among women. Here again we see that the focus seems to be on transforming a woman into an object to be owned by a man. Let me contrast FGM, also sometimes referred to as female circumcision (see ACOG, 1999), with male circumcision. There seems to be a striking contrast in “what is cut off” during the two types of circumcision. In the female circumcision, the clitoris, one of the most sensitive parts of the female sexual organ is cut off, while in the male circumcision, the foreskin, an impediment to the attainment of optimal sexual pleasure is cut off. Thus, the female circumcision like female initiation, it seems, is done in order to strip the woman of power in readiness for her submission to the man who will “own” her. On the other hand, the male circumcision seems to be done to confer more power on the man to “use” women.

Further objectification of women in this study seems to be manifested through the events that take place on the day the initiate graduates from initiation. On this graduation day as earlier alluded to, the initiate is beautifully adorned with ornaments and strategically placed for the viewing pleasure of the public. As F/Dropout 2 explained, the initiation graduation ceremony seems comparable to an “auction sale” where buyers bid for the items that are on display. Her observations are worth repeating here:

...On the day you come out, everybody in the village comes to watch you; they even give you some money and other gifts. As you sit there, men come and make such remarks as, “this one is mine, no matter what, I will marry

her”. Others even touch your face as they give you some money. Some men even go so far as to say, “Even if you are still at school, I want you, I will see you after”.

From the above description given by F/Dropout 2, one can see that the initiation rite graduation ceremony is not an ordinary event; it is an important occasion of “showcasing” the initiate to the public among who are men who seem to come as prospective suitors. The initiation graduation ceremony therefore, it would appear, also acts as a subtle public announcement to men about the availability of the young woman for marriage. It is an occasion where, to use Van Gennep’s (1960) language, the girl is reincorporated into mainstream society having acquired a new identity, an identity which makes her marriageable.

F/Dropout 1 used a metaphor that seems appropriate here to further explain the objectification that takes place when a girl graduates from initiation, “... Nkolola (initiation) is very bad, it spoils girls. It exposes girls the same way we advertise tomatoes when they get ripe- it is as if men are told, ‘Come and see, I have a girl here, she is ripe and ready’”.

Through the use of the metaphor of advertising the sale of tomatoes, F/Dropout 1 seems to reinforce the earlier objectification message portrayed by F/Dropout 2. Firstly, it seems clear from the language that F/Dropout 1 uses that she does not approve of the practice of the female initiation rite, “Nkolola (initiation) is very bad, it spoils girls”. It seems therefore, she uses the metaphor of ripe tomatoes to emphasise the bad influences of initiation on young women, namely that of transforming them into “objects” for sale. At another level, the metaphor of ripe tomatoes which the participant uses seems to describe the transformation that the initiate undergoes during initiation. Among the many characteristics of tomatoes, probably the most striking one is the transformation that happens when ripening takes place. When tomatoes get ripe, they get transformed from the dull, green colour to the eye catching red colour. Ripe tomatoes are attractively inviting- they arouse a hunger to consume in the eyes of a perceiver. Similarly, having successfully gone through the stages of separation, transition, embodied in the initiation rite, the initiates seem to stand at graduation as highly prized “commodities” ready for consumption (marriage).

In relation to this, one of the male research participants who Richards (1956) interviewed in her study of the Chisungu initiation rite of the Bemba speaking people, made a remark that seems to underscore how objectifying initiation is to the young women:

No one would want to marry a girl who had not had her Chisungu danced. She would not know what her fellow women knew. She would not be invited to the Chisungu feasts. She would just be a piece of rubbish, an uncultivated weed, an unfired pot, a fool and simply no woman (Richards, 1956, p. 120).

Through the sexual objectification doctrine that seems to be implanted in the minds of young women during initiation, there is a possibility that the young women's perception of themselves may shift to embrace marriage and sexual roles. Ultimately, these young women may begin to internalise this societal, sexual objectification portrayal of them- they may start viewing themselves in objectifying ways (see Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Through self-objectification, these young women's academic self concept is likely to be negatively affected. There are indications in available literature (e.g. Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn & Twenge, 1998) that self-objectification has a negative impact on academic performance. Further research has demonstrated (see McKinley & Hyde, 1996) that women who experience self-objectification tend to have social anxiety which can impede their optimal academic performance. It therefore seems to follow that among other things, girls who are objectified or who objectify themselves are not likely to perform optimally in their academic tasks.

While most of the studies on objectification of women have been conducted in North America, a western society, they seem to offer some useful insights into the understanding of girls' and women's experiences in patriarchal societies of traditional Zambia in relation to formal schooling. As Markus and Kitayama (1991) have indicated, the concept of self in non-western societies, including the Tonga society where I conducted this study, is understood from a collectivistic point of view. It therefore seems logical to argue that the influence of sexual objectification on the construction of the self and the identity thereof is likely to be higher in collectivistic societies. This aspect of identity formation which Markus and Kitayama explain may therefore also form part of the explanation for the negative influence that the female

initiation rite seemed to have on the young women's schooling in this study. In the next section, I turn to the theme of parents forcing their daughters into early marriages.

7.3 Parents forcing their daughters into early marriages

Marriage as Moore and Habel (1982) observe, is one of the rites of passage performed by many societies around the world to mark the commencement of a shared life between adult partners. Among the Tonga speaking people, the marriage ritual is performed to mark the beginning of a period of companionship and childbearing. In this respect, the female initiation rite which I discussed in the previous section is closely connected to the ritual of marriage, in fact, the initiation rite is largely meant to prepare initiates for marriage (see Rasing, 2001; Richards, 1956).

As I explained in chapter six, when marriage is about to take place among the Tonga speaking people, the family of the suitor and the family of the woman to be married will meet to, among other things, discuss the payment of lobola. The family of the woman to be married will charge anywhere between five animals to well over twenty animals, depending on the specific customs which may vary from area to area and from family to family. Therefore, in this respect, marriages are a respectable source of income among the Tonga speaking people. In fact, dropouts and teachers in this study indicated that the desire for lobola was the major reason why some parents in Haacizibe Village forced their school going daughters into early marriage.

A number of dropouts shared how the practice by parents of pushing their school going daughters into early marriages led a number of girls to prematurely leave school. F/Dropout 3, for instance, explained, "...often parents receive money from suitors while their daughters are still in school. Without you knowing anything, your parents will receive money from a suitor". In this excerpt, by using the word "often", the participant seems to indicate that the practice of marrying off school going girls was common and widespread in Haacizibe Village. The explanation that F/Dropout 3 gives in the above excerpt also seems to indicate that parents in Haacizibe Village used the marriages of their daughters as a means of earning some income. Further, it

appears parents did not consult their daughters before making the decision that they should get married. It seems what determined whether or not the marriage would take place was not the willingness or lack of it, of the girl to be married, but rather the ability of the suitor to pay the agreed upon lobola. The participant seems to portray the passivity of girls in the line where she observes, "...without you knowing anything, your parents will receive money from a suitor..." For F/Dropout 3, the experience was not something that she merely heard about, it was something that she experienced, first hand, in her own family, "...this in fact, happened to a girl in my family; our parents received money from a suitor and spent it but the girl was still in school..."

The teachers in this study seemed to confirm the assertions of the dropouts about school girls prematurely leaving school due to being forced into early marriages by their parents. Teacher 3, for instance, demonstrated the magnitude of the problem by sharing how some parents pushed their school going daughters into polygamous marriages, "... there was actually one case of a girl at this school, she was in grade eight, she never even got pregnant, but her parents pushed her into marriage. She got married to a man who already had five wives; she became wife number six". What seems significant in this excerpt is the fact that the parents of the girl being referred to decided to pull her out of school into marriage "without her even getting pregnant". By adding this phrase, Teacher 3 seems to indicate that the decision to marry the girl off was something deliberately planned by her parents- if she had been married off after a pregnancy, may be one would argue that the parents had been forced to marry her off.

As the dropouts and teachers indicated, the motive behind these forced marriages was the parents' desire for wealth through the lobola paid when their daughters got married. The motive to get some lobola seems authenticated in the above excerpt- no parent would push his/her eighth grade daughter into a polygamous marriage if they were genuinely interested in their daughter's happiness. Most people in Haacizibe Village (see chapter five for description of the site) live below the poverty line, therefore, it seems plausible to also assume that some parents may have forced their school going daughters into early marriages in order to get some income for survival.

The assertions by Teacher 1 in the next excerpt seem to further clarify the practice of parents forcing their school going daughters into early marriages. However, Teacher 1 seems to add another dimension, the dimension of girls eloping with their lovers. Rather than blaming the dropouts for eloping, however, Teacher 1 seems to indicate that the parents may also have a hand in influencing their daughters to elope. The teacher indicates, "...parents will not come to the school to report about this (eloping of their daughters)...so as teachers we take it that parents are interested in the marriage of their daughters because they want to get something..."As indicated by the teacher in this excerpt, it appears when two people eloped, marriage was considered to have taken place and as such the formalities of the payment of lobola had to follow. Thus, it would appear parents may have found the eloping of their daughters as an opportune chance to gain some income through the lobola paid.

Interestingly, the parents in this study seemed to lay the blame of early marriages on their daughters who decided to elope with their lovers. Through the assertions that parents made, it was almost as if the parents were victims of their daughters' decisions to get marriage at the expense of schooling. F/Parent 3, for instance, gave an example of how her daughter eloped, "...we just found out that our daughter had eloped with her boyfriend and that was the end, she got married and she is still married". From this assertion, it seems that the parent was projecting the problem of early marriage onto her daughter. It is not clear why the parent projected the problem, however, one likely reason for the projection might be the parent's attempt to alleviate the bad feeling brought about by the "bad" decision that she made for her daughter to leave school for marriage.

Another parent; M/Parent 1, seems to use a similar technique of projecting the problem onto his daughters, "...all my daughters got married the same way; they eloped with their boyfriends..." What seems to make the assertion of this parent implausible is the consistency with which all his three daughters eloped and got married. Rather than being a manifestation of his daughters' "rebelliousness", the consistency seems to indicate acceptability of eloping as a way of getting married. This explanation seems to tie well with what Teacher 1 above observed namely that parents approved their daughters' decisions to elope. Fobih's (1987) study conducted

in Ghana is among the few studies that have examined school dropout from the point of view of parents and dropouts and reports similar findings where parents tended to project the blame of school dropout onto their children.

To emphasise what dropouts and teachers indicated about lobola being the main reason why parents pushed their school going daughters into early marriages, I would like to here recall an experience of F/Dropout 2 who I cited earlier. This is the young woman who was prevented from going further in education because she was forced to marry a man who was picked for her by her parents. At the time I did the interview with this young woman, she narrated that the man who her parents had forced her to get married to, had abandoned her for a much younger second wife. Seeing marriage had failed to work, this young woman had suggested to her parents that they help her get back into school. The response that F/Dropout 2 got from her parents when she asked for their help to go back to school is worth repeating here:

...Since your husband is very unfaithful and promiscuous, it is possible that you are already infected with the AIDS virus and we would not like to waste our money sending you back to school because we will have no profit. You are maybe going to get sick even before you start working...

As a result of this disillusionment about her parents, F/Dropout 2 observed further in the narrative, "...what I have seen is that my parents were only interested in the money and animals that were paid when I got married".

Going by what the parents of F/Dropout 2 said, it seems they were no longer interested in their daughter because they had already got what they wanted, the lobola. This message seems to come to the fore in the line where the parents tell their daughter, "...we would not like to waste our money sending you back to school because we will have no profit". From this assertion, it seems the focus of this young woman's parents was on, as they put it, "making a profit" out of their daughter. Further, it appears these parents saw the value of their daughter's education only in terms of what it would benefit them in monetary and material terms; they did not seem to show much concern about the benefits that would accrue to their daughter as a person. From this standpoint, it seems these parents were using their daughter as a means for acquiring wealth through the lobola that was paid when she got married.

Again, rather than showing the “heartlessness” of the parents, these findings seem to indicate the levels of poverty in Haacizibe Village. However, the findings also seem to indicate how girls’ and women’s roles in Haacizibe Village are viewed as revolving around marriage and motherhood. In this regard, the view may be that sending a girl to school would be of little benefit since she would (or should) end up as a wife and a mother.

In most of the narratives about their experiences with forced marriages in this study, the young women indicated that there was nothing that they could do once their parents had made the decision for them to leave school. Thus, in the next section, I explore this theme of helplessness exhibited by the female dropouts especially.

7.3.1 Girls at the mercy of parents’ decisions

In the interviews that I had with the dropouts, the young women, some of whom were themselves victims of forced marriages, seemed to speak in a tone of helplessness; they spoke as if they were at the mercy of the decisions made by their parents. This helplessness portrayed by the young women seems to indicate the position of the child in the traditional Tonga culture where these young people come from. In the traditional Tonga society, it is unheard of for a child to counter a decision once it has been made by parents, even if that decision may concern the personal life of the child. Marriage is one such area where parents in the Tonga society make decisions without considering the views of the concerned child. F/Dropout 4, for instance, used a metaphor that seems appropriate to represent the passivity, and to some degree, helplessness of children in the traditional Tonga society, “...parents at that time (adolescence) are our thinkers; they are our heads...”

By saying “parents are our thinkers” or “our heads”, F/Dropout 4 seems to suggest that as children, they were not allowed to “use their brain”, so to speak, to determine what they wanted to do with their lives. Thus, this metaphor which the participant uses seems to suggest that parents had the absolute power to make decisions about how their daughters should live their lives. For these girls, in fact, it seems their fate was further predetermined by the dictates of their patriarchal culture which perceives

the value of a woman as consisting in fulfilling her marriage and motherhood roles. To get back to the metaphor that F/Dropout 4 uses, it seems; just as the body is guided by the decisions made by the head (brain), so too the girls were passively guided by the decisions made by their parents and the patriarchal society.

Similar passivity and helplessness by young women in the face of their parents' decisions seem further portrayed in the following assertion by F/Dropout 2 where she narrates how she was forced to abandon school for marriage: "... I could not say anything because you know, as a child when your parents have said something, you have no choice but to accept what they tell you..." Through this expression, F/Dropout 2 seems to emphasise the position of the child in the Tonga society.

Makwinja-Morara (2007) in her recent study in Botswana makes an observation of the position of the child in the Setswana society which seems to be in agreement with my findings. She observes that the Setswana society has a saying, "a child must be seen but not heard" (Makwinja-Morara, 2007, p. 22). This means that a child does not have authority over him/herself, parents do. Mautle (2001) also observes that in the Batswana traditional society, instruction to children is dictatorial and children are expected to receive information about what to do or what not to do in a docile manner. In these societies, it seems, there is little room for children to question or challenge the authority of adults. The authority to force their daughters into early marriages that was found among the parents in my study appears to emanate from this perception of the child. Secondly, as already alluded to, the tendency for parents to force their daughters into early marriages seems to portray the patriarchal perspective which views women's roles as being centred around marriage and motherhood (Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001).

Reading some of the young women's narratives, one also senses a feeling of them having been trapped by the dictates of their patriarchal culture. The interviews that I had with some of these young women seemed to provide them with a channel to express the negative aspects that they saw in the cultural practices of their society. F/Dropout 2's experience where she narrated how her parents refused to help her get back into school in spite of the marriage for which she was forced to abandon school

failing to work, seems to embody this entrapment. The participant narrated how she felt wedged between the ruined school career on the one hand and the possibility of her life being in great danger because of her promiscuous husband:

...When I told my parents this (that she wanted to go back to school), their response made me to just forget about them completely; they told me, “since your husband is very unfaithful and promiscuous, it is possible that you are already infected with the AIDS virus and we would not like to waste our money sending you back to school because we will have no profit. You are maybe going to get sick even before you start working”.

As can be seen from her expression in this excerpt, F/Dropout 2 seems to have found herself caught “between a rock and a hard place”. She seems to have become disillusioned by the marriage for which her parents forced her to abandon school, yet again having been tangled up by the marriage from which she is not getting much satisfaction, she seems to have no way of going back to school. The problem seems to be further compounded for her by the possibility of exposure to the HIV virus through the bigamous marriage which her husband has dragged her into.

Another manifestation of the sense of entrapment portrayed by these young women seems to be evidenced in the following excerpt from F/Dropout 3’s narrative, where she narrates how being forced into early marriages tended to stifle girls’ educational aspirations, “...we children want to learn, but parents are the problem; often parents receive money from suitors while their daughters are still in school...” As the participant has indicated in this excerpt, girls could not fulfil their desires to pursue their educational careers because they found themselves tied to the decisions made by their parents for them to get married. Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) observed similar helplessness among the Bedouin women. However, unlike what Abu-Rabia-Queder found in the Bedouin society where fathers alone seemed to decide whether or not to let their daughters continue with school, in my study, both fathers and mothers had a hand in making decisions for their daughters to leave school to get married.

On the other hand, though, the young women I interviewed seemed to exhibit some resistance to the patriarchal system which believed in marriage and motherhood as the ultimate goal for women. The participants seemed to show this resistance through the negative light in which they portrayed the practice of forcing girls into early marriages

and through the open negative statements that they made about the female initiation rite (see responses by F/Dropout 2; F/Dropout 1; F/Dropout 4; F/Dropout 3 in chapter six). It does seem therefore in this study that the young women who yielded to the demands by their parents for them to leave school to get married, might have done so out of “helpless” obedience of the patriarchal demands rather than out of conviction. In this manner, the young women seem to have demonstrated, as Abu- Rabia-Queder (2007) argues, feigned conformity to the collective. Further, the helpless conformity which the dropouts seemed to display appears to demonstrate the docile position of the child in traditional African societies that Makwinja-Morara (2007) and Mautle (2001) speak to.

Going by the findings in my study which have indicated that the young women’s views on patriarchy were contrary to the views of their collectivistic patriarchal society, it would appear, in line with Postmes and Jetten’s (2006) views on the position of an individual in a group, what is sometimes labelled as social identity might actually be helpless social conformity to the collective. In that sense as Abu- Rabia-Queder (2007) argues, even in collectivistic societies, individuals do maintain their idiosyncratic views, except that they cannot express those individual views due to the negative social consequences that expressing them would have. Similarly, in my study, it seems the young women yielded to the cultural demands that they leave school to get married not because of identification with their cultural beliefs, but rather because of helpless social conformity to the patriarchal demands of their society. In the next section, I discuss another theme; pregnancy as a route to marriage.

7.4 Pregnancy as a route to marriage

This theme is related to the theme of forced marriages which I discussed in the previous section, in fact, from the participants’ responses, it seems when a girl got pregnant, she was expected to marry the man who had impregnated her. However, like was the case with the theme of parents forcing their daughters into early marriages, this segment of findings seems to reveal some variations in the participants’ perceptions. Parents seemed to blame marriage following pregnancy on their children, while on the other hand, dropouts seemed to lay the blame on their

parents. Fobih (1987) reports similar findings in a study that he conducted in Eastern Ghana.

Dropouts indicated that a number of girls were not able to continue with school after getting pregnant because their parents forced them to get married to the men who impregnated them. F/Dropout 3's experience seems to capture this scenario, "...I had ideas of continuing with school in spite of being pregnant but my parents were not keen on me doing that, so I got married". In this excerpt the participant expresses a wish to have continued with school, however, this wish seems to have been overridden by her parents' decision for her to get married to the man who had impregnated her. Going by the way F/Dropout 3 expresses herself in this excerpt, it seems she was aware of the policy which allowed girls to continue with school in spite of pregnancy. The explanation given by M/Dropout 1 during the focus group discussion seems to shed further light on this matter, "In a number of cases when a girl is impregnated, her parents will chase her from their home so that she can move in with the man who has impregnated her..." The matter seems even better clarified by M/Dropout 3 as he explains what he personally experienced, "...when I impregnated my girlfriend, we were both still at school. My parents went to talk with the girl's parents once they became aware of the whole thing. Shortly after that, my parents paid for her and she was brought home as my wife". As exemplified in these excerpts from the dropouts' narratives, it seems when a girl got pregnant, she was expected to marry the man who impregnated her.

Teachers seemed to reiterate the dropouts' observations that parents forced their daughters to get married to the men who impregnated them. The teachers attributed the practice to parents' desire for the lobola paid when their daughters got married. The following excerpt from Teacher 3's narrative seems to portray this, "...some parents do not want their daughters to come back to school; once they fall pregnant, they quickly marry them off so that they can get some animals as lobola..." Teacher 5 expressed similar sentiments about girls getting married following pregnancy. Because of the practice by parents of marrying off their daughters once they fell pregnant, teachers indicated that a number of girls were not able to re-enrol into school following pregnancy.

The teachers, however, also seemed to blame the lack of success in the programme which allows adolescent mothers to continue with school on the girls themselves. Teachers indicated that even after being given another chance to continue with school, most girls ended up getting pregnant again. Teacher 1, for instance, indicated, "...the general experience is that even if they (adolescent mothers) are called back, they still repeat the mistake". Consequently, Teacher 2 categorically expressed his disdain towards the Ministry of Education policy that allows adolescent mothers to continue with school, "...this programme that allows girls to come back to school after having a child is not helping us at all in that since its inception, it has been pregnancy after pregnancy". Teacher 2 in this excerpt seems to indicate that by allowing adolescent mothers to re-enrol into school, the Ministry of Education had exacerbated the problem of teen pregnancy in schools. Thus, the teacher seems to express regret that the policy was ever introduced by the Ministry of Education, "since its inception, it has been pregnancy after pregnancy".

While indicating the lack of effectiveness in the policy which allows adolescent mothers to get re-enrolled into school, Teacher 2 also seems to indicate that the problem may not be with the policy per se, but with the communities where the girls come from which are not supportive of schooling. He indicated "...the environment where these young children live does not change even after they have experienced their first pregnancy". The teacher in this excerpt seems to blame pregnancies on the communities which put girls in constant danger of falling pregnant. What seems interesting, however, about this assertion that Teacher 2 makes is that, nowhere in the excerpt does he indicate the role that schools may play in exacerbating or alleviating the problem of teen pregnancy. This seems to indicate a possibility of the teacher attempting to project the problem onto the students and their parents. Fobih (1987) reports similar findings in a study which he conducted in Eastern Ghana.

The parents on the other hand seemed to blame the marriages that took place following pregnancy, on their daughters who "rebelliously" decided to elope with the men who impregnated them.

The following excerpt from M/Parent 1's narrative is worth repeating here:

Eee, when I saw that my daughter was pregnant, I talked to her and told her that my desire was for her to go back to school once she delivered, but my daughter did not want that, she eloped.... All my three daughters got married the same way; they eloped with their boyfriends. What I discovered later was that boys eloped with my daughters because they were properly brought up- they (boys) did not want to lose them. I brought my daughters up so well; when they worked in the fields, everybody admired them.

In this excerpt, M/Parent 1 makes some significant assertions about the way his daughter got married. Firstly, he seems to lay the blame of leaving school early on his daughter's decision to elope with her boyfriend. In fact, according to him, he tried to negotiate with his daughter so that she could go back to school after giving birth, "I told her that my desire was for her to go back to school once she delivered, but my daughter did not want that, she eloped..." Up to this point, M/Parent 1 is still the victim of the "rebelliousness" of his daughter. However, reading on in the excerpt, we see the picture changing; the portrayal of himself as victim seems to vanish. M/Parent 1 seems to relinquish the "victim" identity in the part where he says,

...what I discovered later was that boys eloped with my daughters because they were properly brought up- they did not want to lose them. I brought my daughters up so well; when they worked in the fields, everybody admired them.

This last part in M/Parent 1's narrative seems to nullify his earlier claim that he wanted his daughter to continue with school. When we consider that all his three daughters, as he claims, got married through the same way of eloping with their boyfriends, this parent's earlier claims of wanting his daughters to go back to school become even more doubtful. Through the assertions he makes in the latter part of the above excerpt, M/Parent 1 seems to reveal his real intentions of bringing up traditionally well taught daughters who would easily find men to marry them. The parent, in fact, beamed with pride as he indicated, "I brought my daughters up so well; when they worked in the fields everybody admired them". Through this statement, M/Parent 1 seems to express a feeling of success in that he was able to raise his daughters in a manner which allowed them to get husbands and possibly a handsome lobola. This therefore would seem to support what dropouts and teachers indicated

earlier that most parents' interests lay in marrying off their daughters to the men who impregnated them.

F/Parent 5 also seemed to indicate that when a school girl got pregnant, the desire by the parents was for her to get married to the man who impregnated her. She communicates this meaning where she observes, "When a boy impregnates a girl who is still at school, we first charge the boy the money spent on the girl's education, then that's when we come to the actual lobola..." Through charging lobola, it meant, by implication, that pregnancy was deemed as one of the legally accepted ways of getting married in Haacizibe Village.

From the above excerpt, however, F/Parent 5 introduces a new concept, the concept of the penalty fee charged to the man who impregnates a girl. This fee is referred to as "damages" because it signifies that the girl has entered prospective parenthood outside wedlock. Among the Tonga speaking people, marriage is something that is held in high regard; when a girl gets married without getting pregnant outside wedlock, she brings a lot of pride and honour to her family. Such a girl even attracts a higher lobola than one who has had a child outside wedlock. Therefore, it seems damages are charged literally because a girl has become, so to say, a "damaged product" which cannot fetch a good price on the market (marriage). Assertions by M/Parent 2 seem to further clarify the reason why damages are charged when a girl gets pregnant outside wedlock, "...we had to get the boys who made them (his three daughters) pregnant to pay so that we did not lose completely". By using the phrase "so that we did not lose completely", the parent seems to indicate that damages were charged as a way of compensating for the lost opportunity to get a full value lobola (girls who have a child outside wedlock do not fetch a high amount of lobola even if they get married). Thus, it would appear, part of the reason the parents facilitated their school going daughters' marriage to the men who impregnated them was the fear that if they did not do that, their daughters would remain "damaged goods" who would be shunned by men.

Connecting this argument to the earlier discussion where parents were found to force their school going daughters into early marriages, it seems plausible to argue that part of the motivation for the practice might have been the parents' fear that if their

daughters stayed longer in school, they would increase their chances of getting damaged through pregnancy. Thus, parents may have been using early marriages as a way of preserving the “value” of their daughters- better marry them off before they get contaminated. This argument seems to tie well with Abu-Rabia-Queder’s (2006; 2007) findings where she found that among the Bedouin Arabs, some school going girls were forced into early marriages by their fathers for fear that if they stayed long in school, they might lose their honour and bring shame upon their families.

Generally, the findings in this section have been corroborated by earlier studies. For instance, in a study conducted in South Africa, Kaufman et al. (2001) indicate that a number of young people who get pregnant are not able to get re-enrolled in school because they start living with the men who impregnate them. On the other hand, Meekers and Ahmed (1999) found that among young women who dropped out of school in Botswana following a pregnancy and subsequently returned to school, the majority stayed in school until they successfully completed their secondary school education. Meekers and Ahmed’s finding which seems to differ from what other studies, including mine found, may be explained by the observation that Johnson-Hanks (2002) makes. Johnson-Hanks observes that the availability of other adult women in the household to share domestic responsibilities including care-giving duties provides an atmosphere which makes it easier for young mothers to get re-enrolled in school. Thus, as far as the findings in my study are concerned, the failure by a number of girls to return to school following a pregnancy may among other things, be attributed to the fact that some girls were forced to get married to the men who impregnated them. Once they got married, they may have become constrained as Kaufman et al. (2001) argue, by the pressures of marriage and motherhood, which might have put the option of getting re-enrolled back into school out of the question. In the next section I present a conclusion which summarizes the key aspects that I have addressed in this chapter which discussed how the cultural factors influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

7.5 Conclusion

Through the discussion of the findings in this chapter, I have addressed the first question of this study which sought to find out how societal cultural practices influenced the choices that adolescents made about schooling. Specifically, I have demonstrated through the findings that girls in the rural setting, tended to be more prone to drop out of school than boys due to patriarchal pressures that expected girls to fulfil marriage and motherhood roles as opposed to formal schooling. Secondly, I have demonstrated the subtle and insidious nature of the effects of cultural practices on school dropout, mainly due to the role that culture plays in constructing the identity of a people. Finally, through the discussion of the similarities and/or variations in the way dropouts, parents, and teachers perceived the school dropout problem from the cultural perspective, I have demonstrated why in this study I have argued that a holistic approach as opposed to atomistic approaches, might give a better understanding of the school dropout problem. School dropout as many other studies have shown, is a complex problem which cannot be reduced to simplistic cause-effect explanations. In line with this argument, I in the next segment discuss themes indicating how families and communities influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY FACTORS

8.1 Introduction

A number of themes indicating how families and communities influenced adolescents to drop out of school emerged as follows: lack of role models; education is a waste of time; bad influence from peers; lack of parental involvement in their children's education; and low socioeconomic status. In discussing these themes, I address the second and third questions of this study which sought to find out how families and communities in which adolescents lived influenced the choices that they made about schooling. I have addressed these two questions jointly because the findings in this study have shown that they share common aspects which do not warrant their separate treatment.

8.2 Lack of role models

All the three categories of research participants (dropouts, parents, and teachers) in this study indicated lack of role models to motivate the young people to pursue education as one of the factors that influenced school dropout. M/Dropout 4, for instance, indicated, "...in many families there are no educated people who children can look up to for inspiration..." Through this assertion, the participant indicates that most of the people in his village were not educated. F/Dropout 7 seems to express a similar message, "when there is one who is educated in the family, they will be able to help pave the way open for their young brothers and sisters". F/Dropout 7 seems to indicate here that when older siblings are educated in a family, their younger brothers and sisters will find it easier to have commitment in their pursuit of education. Conversely, the participant seems to suggest that not having educated older siblings in a family can become a barrier to the education of the younger siblings.

Teachers also reiterated the influence of role models on students' pursuit of education. Teacher 5, for instance, indicated, "...there are pupils who are doing very well, most of them come from families that are educated...those that do poorly usually do poorly because there is nobody to push them". From Teacher 5's expression, it seems that students strive to maintain the educational standards that are in their families. However, in addition, the teacher seems to suggest that the problem may not necessarily be due to lack of role models who inspire, but rather to the lack of people to provide the academic and non academic support that children need in families. According to Teacher 5's assertion, the lack of family support leads to poor academic performance, an outcome which puts students on a trajectory to drop out of school.

Another teacher, Teacher 3, linked students' pursuit of education to the education attained by parents, "if parents are educated, it is positive because they understand the importance of school..." By indicating that educated parents understand the importance of education, the teacher seems to suggest that educated parents know the benefits of being educated and as such would encourage their children to be diligent in their schooling. Teacher 3 clarifies this position by indicating in the latter part of the narrative, "this becomes even more when a family has family members working in town- those working become role models". Through this statement, the teacher seems to indicate that education becomes more attractive to the young people when there are people in their families who are "living testimonies" of the benefits of education. Implicitly, this seems to suggest that where education has not made a visible difference in the lives of older people in the family, the younger people might not be encouraged to pursue education.

The message of lack of role models to inspire young people in the pursuit of education was echoed by parents in the individual interviews and in focus group discussions. The following excerpt from M/Parent 1's narrative seems to exemplify the parents' observations here, "in this community there are no inspiring people except school teachers, but it is very unlikely that children will get inspired by teachers' lives because ... teachers live like villagers". Through the assertions in this excerpt, M/Parent 1 seems to indicate that education did not make much difference in that even people who were educated did not enjoy a significantly better life. M/Parent 1 uses the

phrase, "...teachers live like villagers". Through this statement, the parent seems to amplify his loss of confidence in education as a means of attaining a higher social stratum. Teachers are the custodians of knowledge, in fact, teachers are the embodiment of the whole education system- all people; doctors, nurses, accountants, administrators, and so on have to pass through the hands of a teacher for them to amount to anything. Therefore, this phrase which puts down teachers seems to amplify the futility of education that M/Parent 1 sees in Haacizibe Village.

One of the parents, F/Parent 5 explained the lack of role models in relation to the "negative inspiration" that young people got from their societies. She observes:

...Children do not know any other life outside their villages. For girls, the moment breasts begin to show, all they want is to get married- that is the kind of life they admire. A lot of them here do not know what it means to live in town...

From this excerpt, F/Parent 5 seems to indicate that the young people were exposed to life that did not inspire them to want to pursue formal education. In this excerpt, the parent, for instance, uses the expression "for girls the moment the breasts begin to show, all they want is to get married". This expression seems to tie well with the earlier findings which indicated that a number of girls got married as soon as they entered puberty. However, the expression also seems to underscore the strong influence that society exerted on the choices that the young people made in their lives. According to F/Parent 5's expression, it seems the young people in her village were stuck in the vicious circle of replicating the lifestyle obtaining in the traditional society. Thus, to try and break this vicious circle, F/Parent 5 devised a strategy that is worth repeating here:

I took my nieces to town to visit my brothers so that they could see the beautiful life that is brought about by education. For the other families that do not have any relatives working in towns, this would be difficult, unless they get inspired by their friends who have seen how educated people live in towns.

Through this excerpt, the parent seems to indicate that as long as children continue to be surrounded by people who have not profited from education, as was found to be

the case in Haacizibe Village, chances of them valuing the pursuit of formal education would remain remote.

These findings seem to corroborate what Abu-Rabia-Queder (2007) found in her study among the Bedouin female dropouts where most of the dropouts she interviewed had parents who were themselves dropouts and unemployed. Rumberger (1983) also argues that better educated parents may have a positive influence on the education of their children. Closely connected to this theme is the theme; education is a waste of time, which I present in the next section.

8.3 Education is a waste of time

Dropouts in this study indicated that they were discouraged from continuing with school to higher levels due to the considerable number of educated people who were without jobs. M/Dropout 5 seems to phrase this well, “a lot of educated people in this community do not have anything, in fact, in a lot of cases the uneducated are leading better lives than those who are educated...” Through this excerpt, the participant seems to convey a sense of disillusionment about education being a means by which people can attain a higher social stratum. Further, over and above being disillusioned about education, the participant seems to berate education. The sense of berating education seems to come to the fore in the line where the participant says, “...the uneducated are leading better lives than those who are educated...” The message behind this statement by the participant seems to be that getting educated is a waste of time. This message seems to be in agreement with what M/Parent 1 cited above indicated, namely that teachers, the custodians of knowledge and education, still led impoverished lives.

M/Dropout 5 went further in the excerpt, “...this (lack of value in education) has made a lot of parents stop applying themselves in the education of their children”. What seems interesting about this statement of the participant is that while he indicates earlier that he saw no difference between the educated and the illiterate in terms of the quality of life, he does not indicate how this discouraged him in the pursuit of education, instead, he talks about how parents got discouraged from supporting their children in the pursuit of education. This would seem to indicate how dependent the

participant was on the sponsorship of the parents, however, at another level, it seems to indicate the participant's attempt to project the problem of not seeing value in education on to his parents. Fobih's (1987) study in Ghana yielded similar findings where he reports that dropouts tended to project the blame of school dropout onto their parents.

Parents echoed similar sentiments as did the dropouts regarding education not making much difference in the lives of people who went through it. F/Parent 3's assertion exemplifies the parents' responses here, "The main reason why children do not apply themselves in school is that they see that even those who have completed school have no jobs and their lives are not any better..." This excerpt seems to be similar in meaning to an earlier cited one where M/Parent 1 indicated that teachers' lives were not motivating to the children because teachers led impoverished lives as did the ordinary villagers who never went to school. In the present excerpt, however, F/Parent 3 speaks about the lack of jobs on the job market even for the people who complete school. Here, as indicated earlier, the parent seems to indicate a loss of confidence in school as a means of attaining a higher social stratum- the parent seems to have been disillusioned by education. In addition to disillusionment, however, the parent also seems to detach herself from the problem. She indicates in the opening line of the excerpt, "...children do not apply themselves in school..." This phrase seems to indicate an attempt at projecting the problem onto the children. The projection of the problem onto children is interesting especially in light of the earlier finding where M/Dropout 5 seemed to project the school dropout problem onto the parents. These findings also seem to confirm Fobih's (1987) findings where he indicates that parents and children tend to blame the problem of school dropout on each other.

Notwithstanding the back passing of blame that dropouts and parents seemed to engage in, they seem to agree that education did not prove useful as a means of attaining a better socioeconomic status. Barton (2005) supports these findings; he argues that clarifying the links between school and getting a job may convince more students to stay in school. Similar findings are reported by Dekkers and Claassen (2001) who argue that some students in the Netherlands were lured out of school because they saw no job prospects at the end of the school career.

Related to the dropouts' and parents' observations about school not making much difference in the lives of people who went through it, teachers in this study indicated that the school syllabi that were being followed in schools did not have much practical relevance to the lives of people in the communities where they lived. Consequently, teachers suggested in individual interviews and the focus group discussion that to remedy the problem, schools needed to introduce more practical subjects in schools whereby students would learn practical skills which they would directly apply for the betterment of their lives in the communities. Teacher 3, for instance, argued, "Practical subjects are living subjects because students can see and apply what they learn. In other subjects, the lessons are a bit far from reality..." Through this assertion, the teacher seems to suggest that some of the content on the school syllabi was foreign. Thus, the teacher argues that students would find practical subjects useful because they would apply them in their communities.

To demonstrate how foreign the school syllabi were, Teacher 3 draws an image from one of the topics in geography, "...in geography, students learn about the prairies, but they have never seen them..." Teacher 3 seems to deliberately use a symbol of something that does not exist much in Africa; "prairies" to accentuate how foreign and irrelevant some subjects were to the local conditions. Prairies are a type of land and climate mostly found in parts of the United States of America and parts of Canada. Both in terms of the vegetation and crops that grow on them and the kind of temperatures obtaining there, prairies are vastly different from the African tropical lands. Therefore, Teacher 3 seems to use the image of the "prairies" as a hyperbole to emphasise how "foreign" and thus, irrelevant some school syllabi were to the local conditions.

Another teacher, Teacher 1 indicates how practical subjects would bring relevance to the school syllabi, "We need to bring in more practical subjects like industrial arts...These subjects would motivate the children..." Through this excerpt, the teacher seems to indicate that students were more enthusiastic to learn practical subjects. The observation made by Teacher 1 in this excerpt, seems to be in agreement with what the dropouts and parents indicated earlier namely that education made no difference in the lives of the people who went through it.

The suggestion made by teachers in my study to make school syllabi more responsive to people's needs in the communities by introducing more practical subjects seems to be in line with the findings of earlier studies. McDill et al. (1985), for instance, point out that having school curricula that are purely academic tends to sideline students from disadvantaged backgrounds who might be more interested in taking up subjects that bear more relevance to the demands of the job market. McDill and colleagues further argue that having practically oriented school curricula would broaden the scope of the education given to students. Similar findings were reported by Bridgeland et al. (2006) where they argue that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning, they would improve the students' chances of staying in school until graduation. Voelkl (1997) also argues that students identify themselves with their schools more if they see that the subjects that they are studying will enable them lead a better life when they graduate.

While respecting the suggestions made by the teachers in my study to introduce more practical subjects in schools, it seems to me that such a move might limit some of the students. Firstly, the move might take us back to the problems that many African countries were grappling with during the colonial regimes. Among many things, one of the major problems of the colonial education system in Zambia as elsewhere in many African countries was that it was largely designed to give African students vocational skills which would allow them to quickly acquire practical skills to use as manual labourers in industries (see Lungu, 1993). African students, Lungu further observes, were not expected to be in the academic streams of school syllabi because they were not expected to proceed to the tertiary levels of education. Probably this was the reason why certificates were awarded even at the end of primary education. Certificates in this case seem to have been awarded to African students as a symbol of them having completed the level of education that they needed to complete to be able to do "their kind of jobs" well. The system of awarding certificates at the end of the seventh grade has since been abolished in Zambia as schools are now poised more to giving all students an equal chance to fulfil academic syllabi that will enable them get into tertiary institutions.

Lungu (1993) also points out that the colonial period was characterised by the rise of scientific racism which promoted the view that Africans had mental capacities which only allowed them to comprehend practical skills. Thus, during that era, subjecting Africans to academic programmes was viewed as a futile exercise. These issues about the inferiority of the African people's intellectual abilities were partly as Lyons (1970) observes, responsible for the focus on vocational programmes in colonial schools in Africa. For instance, Curtin cited in Lungu (1993), observes that in Sierra Leone, a less academic type of education which mainly focused on practical skills was designed for Africans by colonial masters.

Against this background, the danger that I see in placing a lot of emphasis on practical subjects in schools is that it might take us back to those colonial times where African students were made to erroneously feel that they did not have the intellectual ability to pursue purely academic programmes. Therefore, while introducing practical subjects might appear to solve some of the immediate problems in education, in the long term, it might confine some students (specifically those students from disadvantaged backgrounds) to vocational courses where they might not be able to break into the academic streams, which they need to do to be able to favourably compete in the dwindling job market of this modern world.

In my view therefore, emphasis should not be placed on practical subjects at the expense of academic subjects- it should not be an "either" "or" kind of scenario. Practical subjects are important and by all means should be encouraged, however, they should not overshadow academic subjects without which our children would fail to break the various limiting barriers of oppression which continue to enslave many. In the next section, I discuss how peer pressure influenced school dropout.

8.4 Bad influence from peers

All three categories of participants in this study indicated how bad influence from peers tended to lure students out of school. Activities such as beer drinking, smoking, truancy, and engaging in sexual activities were cited as the most common ones which peer groups engaged in at the expense of schooling. F/Dropout 5, for instance,

indicated, “Girls mostly roam around with boys, even those who are still at school, they do not want to read.... most boys also drink beer and a good number of these are still in school”.

What seems interesting about the preceding excerpt and others on peer pressure (see chapter six) is that most of the dropouts seemed to speak of bad influence from peers as if it were a problem “out there”. It is almost as if they were reporting how peer pressure leads to school dropout, as opposed to how it may have influenced them to leave school. The reason for the dropouts’ “detachment” from peer pressure might have been that peer pressure being a bad thing that is frowned upon by parents and teachers alike, dropouts may have felt more comfortable talking about it in a disassociative tone. The other possible reason why the dropouts might have spoken of peer pressure in a detached manner might have been due to the fact that they were speaking of what influenced them to drop out in retrospect. Having had already dropped out of school, these dropouts may have felt better to talk about peer pressure in relation to what present day students were experiencing in relation to peer pressure. Further, by describing generally how peer pressure led to school dropout, it seems the dropouts were emphasizing that things in the communities in which they lived were still bad- peer pressure was still a major school dropout factor as much as it was during their time. In this respect therefore, these dropouts might have been using the description of how peer pressure led present students to prematurely leave school to vivify their own retrospective experiences.

Parents largely echoed the dropouts’ sentiments regarding bad influence from peers as one of the reasons why adolescents dropped out of school. The following excerpt from F/Parent 2 represents well the responses given by parents here, “children are a problem when they meet their peers...we try to advise them but they are always running around to concerts to dance...” In this particular excerpt, the parent makes reference to children pursuing “fun” at the expense of schooling. However, the parent also seems to communicate the “rebelliousness” of children, “...we try to advise them but...” This statement seems to communicate a sense of children having overpowered their parents by doing what they wanted even if it drew them out of school. Thus, it

seems parents were at their wits' end with regard to controlling the effects of peer pressure on their children.

Teachers also indicated the bad influences of peer pressure on the pursuit of education. Teacher 5, for instance, indicated, "those who drop out are those who involve themselves in such activities as drinking beer, and smoking... on the side of girls, they involve themselves in activities with boys..." The teacher in this excerpt seems to indicate that involvement in "bad" activities with peers was a precursor to dropping out.

Teacher 4 in the next excerpt also cites students' "bad" behaviour as indicative of school dropout, "...you find that girls (those about to drop out) are truant and do not participate as much in class...boys get violent to their peers, they even get rude in their responses to teachers". From this excerpt, it seems the teacher is indicating that bad behaviour is a sign that a student is getting detached from school. Take for instance, "truancy" which the teacher cites as an indicator of school dropout. What is truancy? Truancy with regard to school attendance refers to staying away from school some of the times- it is an erratic pattern of attending school. This would seem to indicate that students who were about to drop out of school did not drop out suddenly, but withdrew themselves from school gradually. Earlier findings (e.g. Garnier et al., 1997; Alexander et al., 2001) have confirmed that school dropout does not happen abruptly, but builds up over a period of time.

Teacher 4 also cites "students not wanting to participate" in classroom activities as another sign that the premature exit from school was about to take place. By not wanting to participate in classroom activities, it means the students were getting detached from school- it is almost as if they had dropped out before the actual drop out. This interpretation seems to fit Finn's (1989) argument namely that school dropout is preceded by the more subtle psychological and emotional withdrawal of the concerned students. Similarly, the other bad behaviours of students being "violent" and being "rude" which Teacher 4 cites seem to be indicative of the psychological detachment from school that students experienced.

Findings from earlier studies seem to be in agreement with these findings from my study. Makwinja-Morara (2007), for instance, in her study found that peer pressure was responsible for a number of students getting involved with the opposite sex and becoming sexually active at a young age. Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) found that among other things, actual dropouts and those students who were on the verge of dropping out of school had more friends who had dropped out. This finding by Ellenbogen and Chamberland seems to indicate that peer groups had some influence on the decisions that the young people made whether to continue with school or to drop out. Janosz et al. (1997) also argue that future dropouts tended to have friends who were not interested in school. In the next section, I discuss how the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

8.5 Lack of parental involvement in their children's education

Dropouts in this study indicated that they did not receive much support from parents in their pursuit of education. For instance, M/Dropout 3 observed, "Parents want their children to do what they (parents) do; if they are farmers, they will want their children to be farmers as well..." From this excerpt, the participant seems to indicate that school took second place to the home "chores" that children had to engage in. Through this expression, the participant seems to also indicate that parents were more concerned about giving their children some apprenticeship in the various activities so that they (children) could learn how to survive in the community. In the latter part of the excerpt, M/Dropout 3 seems to clarify the position even further, "Because of this (wanting their children to become apprentices), parents do not really push their children in school..." The following excerpt from M/Dropout 1's narrative seems to communicate a similar message, "...my father wanted me to manage things on the farm...because of this he was reluctant to find me a place in school". For M/Dropout 1's father, running the farm took precedence over formal schooling. These statements from both participants seem to complement what the dropouts and parents observed earlier in the chapter where they indicated that they did not see any point in children pursuing formal education because even after completing school, people's socioeconomic statuses still remained low.

For the female dropouts, there was an indication that they found it difficult to study at home because their parents expected them to fulfil home chores. F/Dropout 2's experience exemplifies what the female dropouts experienced here:

Girls usually do not have time to do their school work at home because they get home from school at 5pm. When they get home, they have to start cooking, after that, they have to do the dishes and then sweep the house. You could only study late at night when you were already very tired.

This excerpt seems to manifest an issue of gender role stereotyping where girls were expected to do most of the house chores because they were expected to run homes as wives and mothers. There seems to be a link here between the chores that girls were given in a home and the teaching that they received during initiation (see chapter seven). As I argued in chapter seven, the implication of this kind of upbringing for the young women is that they may begin to construct their self-image around these societal expectations and relegate formal schooling more and more into the background.

Another thing that seems interesting about F/Dropout 2's excerpt is the way in which she combines the present tense with the past tense. She uses the present tense in the first two sentences of the excerpt, however, in the last sentence, she abruptly switches to the past tense, "...you could only study late at night when you were already very tired". The switch from the present tense to the past tense seems to signify that the participant is explaining something that still happens the way it used to happen a couple of years back when she was still in school. In other words, the participant seems to be indicating that girls still go through the same gender role stereotyping even in present day. The other likely explanation for the shift in the tense may be due to the fact that the participant was relating her experiences in retrospect and as such was using the present to "bring to life" what she went through during her time.

Teachers echoed the dropouts' observations about parents not being supportive of their children's schooling. Teachers indicated that some of the parents kept their children out of school in order for them (children) to fulfil some chores at home. Teacher 5, for instance, pointed out, "... you see... in this area there is dipping of animals. You find on those days, boys are given the responsibility of taking animals

for dipping...” This assertion seems to be in agreement with the observation made by the dropouts earlier that their parents gave precedence to home duties over schooling. Teacher 2 gave a similar message, “...the type of wealth that is in villages requires the presence of a child at home to take care of it and manage it. For example, animals have to be managed by children”.

In both the excerpts above, Teachers 5 and 2 make reference to students, boys in this case, being kept from school to take care of cattle by their parents. Among the Tonga speaking people, cattle are such a highly valued possession that people will go to great lengths to take care of them. Apart from being a means of accomplishing work such as pulling ploughs, carts, sledges, and being used as a source of milk and meat, cattle among the Tonga speaking people are viewed as a status symbol- they are kept for prestige. To a large extent, people’s greatness is measured by the size of their herds of cattle. This is why, as the teachers and dropouts indicated earlier in chapter seven, some parents even go to an extent of pushing their school going daughters into early marriages to get some cattle. It would therefore appear, as Teachers 2 and 5 have indicated, parents placed taking care of cattle before schooling for similar reasons here.

Some teachers also indicated that parents’ lack of commitment in the education of their children was shown through their (parents’) inability to urge or encourage their children to attend school. For example, Teacher 4 indicated, “... a lot of times, children stay out of school for one week, even two weeks and parents will not do anything...” In light of what Teacher 5 and Teacher 2 cited above observed, namely that some parents detained their children so that they could fulfil some chores at home, this assertion by Teacher 4 seems to make sense. Looking at the other findings in this study, in fact, one wonders if the children stayed away from school for weeks wilfully or they did so because they were detained by their parents to help in the home chores. I would argue that the latter reason seems more plausible under the circumstances. Anyhow, assuming that some of the children wilfully stayed away from school, it is possible that their parents did nothing to urge them to attend school because that became an opportunity for them to have extra labour to use. These interpretations seem to make sense especially in light of the earlier discussed theme

where the dropouts and parents perceived education to be a waste of time. A similar interpretation can be made on the assertion which another teacher, Teacher 1 made, "...there is for example, a family nearby here where all the boys have dropped out and are working on the farms and the parents of these boys are just quiet about it..."

In view of the practice by parents of pulling their children out of school whenever they felt like and not urging their children to consistently attend school, Teacher 1 uses an expression that seems to encapsulate the frustration of the teachers: "Our parents feel school is like digging unconnected holes in the garden; you dig one hole here today, you dig another one there tomorrow..." By using the image of "unconnected holes", the teacher seems to paint the picture of the lack of progress that comes about when children miss lessons for days on end- they experience gaps in the knowledge acquired which in the end might result in failure. In the last line of the excerpt, Teacher 1 summarizes the relationship that exists between parents and teachers, "...parents sometimes become our enemies because we want our students to be consistent in their attendance of school..." From this expression that the teacher uses, it seems there was little collaboration between teachers and parents in ensuring that students fully benefited from schooling, in fact, there was antagonism or "enmity", as the teacher puts it.

In this study, the parents' responses also indicated that they (parents) had little interaction with the teachers who taught their children. The parents seemed to indicate that they only interacted with teachers when they were required to do so by the school authorities. These were mainly times when there were school meetings and when there were problems involving their children. M/Parent 3, for instance, indicated, "Teachers write us letters when our children are not doing so well at school and we go to see them". This assertion by the parent seems to suggest that parents would not make the time to visit the school attended by their children if they had not been summoned to do so. For another parent, M/Parent 4, the interactions with teachers were limited to school meetings, "I used to go (to the children's school) during meetings". In the case of M/Parent 1, the school visits were confined to attending to disciplinary problems of the son, "...teachers used to complain that he liked fighting a lot at school. Teachers used to tell us to sit the boy down and advise him". As can be

seen from the expressions of the parents, the parents' involvement in their children's schooling seemed to have been of a reactive nature, as opposed to it being proactive. In other words, it seems without having school meetings or disciplinary problems involving their children arising, parents might not have interacted with the teachers of their children.

From these findings, it would appear parents were a little detached from their children's education. As a result, students may have felt that the pursuit of formal schooling was not important. Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study conducted in Botswana yielded similar findings. She reports that parents of dropouts showed little involvement in the academic and non academic affairs of their children. Fagan (1995) and Fine (1986) also report that a lack of family support often pulls children away from school. Bridgeland et al. (2006) likewise indicate that one of the keys to keeping students in school is to have better communication between the parents and school personnel. Similarly, Rumberger et al. (1990), report that most parents of dropouts were not actively involved in the education of their children. Coleman's (1987) findings about school dropout being linked to lack of social capital in families and communities also seem to provide support for these findings. In a study conducted in Eastern Ghana, Fobih (1987) indicates that school dropout was linked to parents' unsupportive attitudes towards the education of their children.

In the context of this study, there are a number of explanations that can be given as to why there seemed to have been inadequate parental involvement in the education of their children. Firstly, we saw earlier that a number of parents indicated that they were not enthusiastic about the education of their children because there was no real benefit that they found in educating their children. Parents indicated that they developed this negative attitude towards education due to a number of people in the Haacizibe community who had completed school but had no jobs. Thus, the parents' reluctance to apply themselves fully in the education of their children may have been a reflection of their loss of confidence in school as a means of attaining higher social strata. Parents, therefore, may have felt more inclined to involve their children in home chores as there might have been more benefits there especially as far as the immediate survival of families was concerned. In relation to this, Fobih (1987) argues that

students dropped out of school due to the eroded value of school certificates which did not enable graduates to acquire jobs.

Secondly, the parents' "indifference" towards the education of their children may have emanated from parents regarding school as something that did not have anything to do with them as parents. This misconception about school may have emanated from the notion that what goes on in school has nothing to do with what goes on at home and vice versa. Thus accordingly, the school environment and home environment may have been viewed as mutually exclusive rather than them being complementary to each other. Makwinja-Morara's (2007) findings seem to corroborate this argument. She observes that the perception by some parents is that life at home does not have anything to do with school work.

The third reason why parents were not actively involved in the education of their children may have been due to the high poverty levels in Haacizibe Village. Most of the people survived by doing odd jobs, working in their fields, and selling at markets (see chapter five for description of the site). These activities mostly required that parents leave home as early as five in the morning and come back home after eight in the evening. With such busy schedules to ensure their own survival and that of their families, some parents may have genuinely found it difficult to find free time in which they could visit the schools attended by their children.

Finally, in view of the observation made by dropouts and teachers in this study that some parents forced their school going daughters into early marriages (see chapter seven), the reluctance by parents to support their daughters in the pursuit of formal schooling may have been an indication that the parents expected their daughters to fulfil only their marriage and motherhood roles. For these parents, the focus may have been centred on ensuring that their daughters learnt the traditional patriarchal requirements to enable them get men who would not just marry them, but more so pay a handsome lobola. In this regard, the female initiation rite may have been viewed as a much more important school for girls compared to formal schooling. In the next section I discuss the final theme in this chapter on the influences of family and community on school dropout.

8.6 Low socioeconomic status

The findings in this study have also indicated that the low socioeconomic status of the families where the dropouts came from influenced school dropout. Haacizibe Village, as described in chapter five, is a poor rural setting where most of the residents struggle to earn a living. Because of the high poverty levels, dropouts indicated that even school going children had to be involved in helping raise income for the survival of families. The assertion in the following excerpt from F/Dropout 3's account seems to portray this aspect well:

The way we live especially us women, survival is through selling at the market. This is the kind of life I have always led; even when I was a young girl, I used to all the time go to the market to sell things... I would go in the bush to dig some lusala (edible roots that are cooked as relish) and sell them at the market. Sometimes I would be sent to sell fresh milk after the cows had been milked. That has been my life.

In this excerpt, F/Dropout 3 indicates that she had been involved in helping raise some income for the family through selling various commodities at the market from a young age. The level of poverty was so high that as the participant indicates, people went to an extent of selling edible wild roots. The participant indicates in the last line of the excerpt that her whole life in the village had been centred on doing various chores to provide help in fending for the family, "this has been my life". In view of the earlier findings which indicated that some parents detained their children so that they could help with the home chores, one can only imagine how erratic these young people must have been in their school attendance. It is no wonder that Teacher 1 as cited above, likened students' erratic attendance of school to the "digging of unconnected holes in the garden".

For M/Dropout 5, poverty made it difficult for him to continue with school, "I stopped because my mother could not pay my school fees... to get where I got (grade 7), I used to grow and sell vegetables at the market..." As can be seen from this excerpt, some students got involved in income generating activities not just to raise income for survival, but to raise money for school as well. M/Dropout 5 struggled to pay for himself at school, however, as the time went on, he could not afford it. This prompted

him to opt to leave school, "...I just decided to stop school. When I stopped school, I went to work for one of these white farmers who just came from Zimbabwe". The decision that the dropout made to drop out of school due to failure to pay school fees seems interesting in that education at that level was free. However, it would appear the participant might have been referring to the other school requirements such as uniforms, books, pencils, PTA fund, and so on which students still had to provide.

Teachers also indicated that low socioeconomic status was one of the major contributing factors to students leaving school prematurely. As a result of poverty, teachers indicated that a number of students were involved in income generating activities which invariably drew them out of school. Teacher 5, for instance, observed, "...if you went to the market even right now, you would see that some of these children are as young as 12 years old and are still in school". This excerpt indicates the extent to which school going girls and boys were involved in income generating activities to supplement their family income. Teacher 5's assertion seems to agree with what F/Dropout 3 indicated earlier namely that from a young age she was involved in selling various things at the market. Another teacher, Teacher 1 underscores the involvement of students in raising income for their families, "Three quarters of the community in which we are here is in poverty. You find that most children will run to the market to do a bit of business to survive".

Due to the high poverty levels in Haacizibe and other surrounding villages, teachers indicated that when a number of white farmers who were chased by President Mugabe from Zimbabwe settled in the area, they attracted a number of school going boys, especially, as farm labourers. The following excerpt from Teacher 2's account represents the teachers' observations here, "When these farmers came from Zimbabwe, they attracted a lot of our children especially boys to the extent that the school nearly grounded to a halt until we raised a complaint..." As the teacher indicates, the whole population of boys in the school nearly abandoned school to go and work for the white farmers so that they could get some income. The situation got so bad that the teachers had to complain (presumably to the white farmers) about hiring school children to work as farm labourers.

The white farmers may have violated some labour laws as far as hiring school boys to work as farm labourers was concerned, however, it is also likely, looking at the high poverty levels in Haacizibe Village, that the school boys themselves went looking for jobs from these white farmers. This interpretation seems plausible especially in light of what M/Dropout 5 cited earlier indicated, namely that when he could not raise the money for school requirements, he opted to work for the white farmers. In addition, considering the indications by dropouts and parents, that education was a waste of time, it is possible that the school boys were encouraged by their parents to work on the farms. In fact, as Teacher 1 indicated under the theme; lack of parental involvement in the education of their children, some parents had subtly encouraged their school going sons to withdraw from school and get jobs as farm labourers. Teacher 4 under the same theme also indicated that some parents did not bother to urge their children to attend school even if they stayed away for weeks on end. Thus, the white farmers, it seems, only took advantage of a situation that was already unfavourable for formal schooling.

Parents also cited poverty as one of the factors that led to students dropping out of school. M/Parent 4, for instance, categorically stated, “I could not pay for him (son) at school; I have totally nothing”. This parent indicates that his son had to drop out of school because he could not support him at school. The parent uses a phrase with an intensifier to emphasise his level of poverty, “...I have totally nothing”. Owing to the high poverty levels in Haacizibe Village, M/Parent 1 makes an interesting observation about how parents tried to cope with supporting their children, “when you see that you will not manage to fulfil all the needs of your children, the best thing is to give them money to start a business so that they can fend for themselves”.

The above excerpt from M/Parent 1’s account seems to provide further evidence that some parents actually facilitated their children’s engagement in income generating activities. The parent observes in the excerpt, “...when you see that you will not manage to fulfil the needs of your children...” Among the needs that the parent is referring to in this phrase, it is likely that school needs are included. Thus, it seems to follow that when a parent decided to make a child start his or her own business, they also made the decision that they would not provide the school support. This

interpretation does not seem far fetched especially considering what the parents indicated earlier, namely that they perceived school as a waste of time. In light of this, it appears part of the reason parents encouraged their children to start their own businesses may have emanated from the perception of the futility of schooling that was earlier observed. This may also partly account for the parents' passivity in the education of their children that has been indicated in this study.

Finally, the observation that M/Parent 2 makes in the following excerpt seems to encapsulate well the limitations that parents faced in sending their children to school due to poverty, "Unless we parents have food and money, only then can we have the willingness to educate our children". The meaning in M/Parent 2's assertion in other words seems to be that most people were too inadequately satisfied at the physiological level to even think about the higher needs of educating their children. This assertion also seems to indicate that the parents had a desire to send their children to school, however, due to poverty, there was nothing they could do about it.

These findings are in agreement with the findings of earlier studies. Rumberger's (1983) study, for instance, reports of students from poor SES backgrounds being more prone to drop out of school. Lemrini (2000) also indicates that the prevalence of school dropout tends to be higher in poverty stricken communities. Regarding the findings in this study which indicated that some dropouts left school because of engaging in income generating activities, Ellenbogen and Chamberland (1997) found in their study that students who were on the verge of dropping out associated more with peers who had a job and were earning some money. Similarly, in the Netherlands, Dekkers and Claassen (2001) report of young people being lured out of school by opportunities in the job market. In the next section, I make a conclusion of this chapter on how family and community influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

8.7 Conclusion

Through discussing the findings in this chapter, I have addressed the second and third questions of this study which sought to find out how families and communities in

which adolescents lived, influenced the choices that they made about schooling. The findings have indicated that there were a number of interrelated family and community factors which influenced adolescents to drop out of school. Firstly, the findings have indicated that the families and communities where the dropouts came from did not have educated people who could inspire young people to pursue education ardently. Secondly, the dropouts and parents indicated that the pursuit of education was not encouraging in that most of the people who were educated in the community did not lead better lives afterwards. In view of this, the dropouts and their parents alike viewed education as a futile venture. In addition, the findings have indicated that due to high poverty levels, a number of parents were more inclined to involve their children in income generating activities to supplement the family income than they were in encouraging them to attend school. As a result, teachers in this study indicated that a number of students were erratic in their school attendance. In the next chapter, I discuss themes indicating how the school environment influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL FACTORS

9.1 Introduction

The following quotation from Lee and Burkam's (2003) study seems appropriate to open the discussion of the findings in this chapter:

...explanations for students dropping out of school before graduation that rely solely on students' social background and school behaviours are incomplete. Although our research has demonstrated that students' social and academic backgrounds both are associated with the likelihood of students' dropping out of high school, the story doesn't (and shouldn't) end there...schools can exert important organizational effects on students' decisions to drop out or stay in school, above and beyond their individual behaviours and backgrounds (p. 383-84).

As earlier indicated, there are broadly speaking two environments that are critical in ensuring a successful educational career of a student. These are: the family and community environment, which I discussed in the preceding chapter; and the school environment. Thus in this chapter, I discuss how circumstances obtaining in the school that the dropouts attended may have influenced them to drop out of school. In discussing these findings, I will be addressing the fourth question of this study which sought to find out how schools influenced the choices that adolescents made about schooling. Two themes namely; no help from teachers, and lack of students' support system in school emerged here.

9.2 No help from teachers

With regard to what went on in the school that the dropouts attended, there was a general indication by the dropouts that they did not get much individualized help from teachers on the areas where they needed personalised attention. For instance, F/Dropout 2 indicated in part of her narrative, "...teachers used to teach us as a group; they never used to give us any individualised attention to find out what problems each of us was facing..." From this excerpt, the participant seems to implicitly indicate that

teachers did not take the time to attend to individual students who might have needed further help in certain aspects of lessons. F/Dropout 2 seems to clarify this position in the latter part of her narrative where she indicates, "...they (teachers) never used to check our note books...the only teacher who would bother about my work, for instance, was the one who was married to my aunt; he would check my books at home..." In this portion of the narrative, the participant seems to indicate that teachers did not bother whether students took down the lessons in the note books or not. From this assertion, it sounds as if teachers were more concerned about getting through the lessons than they were about ensuring that the lessons were well grasped. Fortunately, for F/Dropout 2, she had an uncle who was a teacher and could check her work at home. One can only wonder how many students actually benefited from those "group" lessons that teachers delivered without monitoring what individual students did.

These findings are in agreement with what students interviewed in Patterson et al's. (2007/2008) study indicated. In all three focus group discussions that Patterson and his colleagues conducted, students indicated that a typical class period consisted of teachers giving students a whole lot of unexplained notes which they had to struggle to understand on their own. In relation to this, Bridgeland et al. (2006) argue that one-on-one interaction between teachers and students significantly reduced chances of students dropping out of school. Suh and Satcher (2005) also explained how personalized care from teachers helped students benefit more from schools. Similarly, Lee and Burkam (2003) report that school dropout is not likely to occur where there is individualised interaction between teachers and students.

Further, dropouts in my study indicated that teachers did not make themselves available to attend to students outside the normal class time as a way of remedying some problem areas. The following assertion by M/Dropout 3 seems to capture this aspect well, "...there never used to be any remedial lessons. If a student did not understand during class time that would be the end..." This assertion seems to reinforce what F/Dropout 2 indicated earlier namely that teachers did not bother to attend to individual students' problems. In the current excerpt, M/Dropout 3 reinforces the message by stating that there was "never" remediation given even when

students needed it. Again, the lack of remediation leaves one wondering what happened to those students who might have needed extra help to grasp the lessons.

Bridgeland et al. (2006) also corroborate these findings; they argue that after-school tutoring, Saturday school, summer school and extra help from teachers help enhance students' chances of staying in school until completion. Suh and Satcher (2005) also argue that private individual help from teachers helps students identify more with the school environment as opposed to being taught in a group. The findings from these earlier studies seem to suggest that attending to individual needs of students is a critical matter which can sometimes determine whether a student stays in school till completion or leaves prematurely.

There was also a strong indication from teachers in this study that they (teachers) were not able to give students individualised attention during lessons. The teachers attributed their inability to attend to students' individual needs to the big numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. Teacher 2's assertions represent well the limitations that teachers faced as a result of having too many students in one class and are worth repeating here:

...a lot of children get discouraged because they go for a long time without having individualised attention from a teacher. Our classes are abnormally large; they mostly range from 69 to 81 pupils, as you can see from the chart on the wall...

As Teacher 2 has indicated in the above excerpt, many students "got discouraged" because of not getting individualised attention from teachers. By using the phrase "children get discouraged", the teacher seems to suggest that lack of individualised attention from teachers lowered the motivation of the students to learn. In addition to being unable to motivate students through giving them individualised attention, it must have been difficult for teachers to spot individual students who may have had problems in some subject areas, due to the huge numbers. Secondly, even where teachers may have spotted students who may have required individual attention, it must have been difficult to attend to those problems because of the big numbers. I will shed further light on these aspects when I link these findings to Finn's (1989) school dropout models later in the chapter.

These findings seem to almost replicate the findings of a recent study that was conducted in the United States. In this study, Patterson et al. (2007/2008) found that one of the major complaints teachers gave about their inability to teach well was that classes were too large. For example, one math teacher who the researchers interviewed complained, “having 43 freshmen in one class... that is not a good beginning experience for kids to have that many in a class” (Patterson et al., 2007/2008, p. 11). Another teacher interviewed in the same study described the consequences of large class sizes, “I had one class of 37 and one class of 33. I would get done with the lesson and you know, 20 hands would go up for help and I could only get to about 10 of them” (p. 11).

As can be seen from the numbers involved per class, the numbers in the Patterson et al. (2007/2008) study are about half the size of the numbers of students that teachers had to handle in one class in my study. If the numbers as experienced by the teachers interviewed in the Patterson et al. study were too big to enable teachers have individual interaction with students, one can only imagine, notwithstanding the idiosyncratic differences between the two environments, how much harder it must have been for the teachers I interviewed who had to handle double the number of students in most cases.

Pittman and Haughwout (1987) also yielded similar findings; they argue that creating environments of optimal student participation and engagement is difficult to achieve where there are large numbers of students:

Larger student bodies appear to produce a less positive social environment, less social integration, and less identity with the school. These may translate into more premature school leavings (p. 343).

Voelkl (1997) points out that students’ disidentification with the school (and eventual drop out), is partially determined by how involved students are in the school activities. In relation to the findings from my study, it seems that the large numbers of students that teachers had to handle in one class may have contributed to some students alienating themselves from the school environment. This in turn may have resulted in some of them dropping out of school.

Another consequence of having large numbers of students in one class which teachers cited in my study were the difficulties that they had with regard to marking students' work. The teachers indicated that they did not mark or correct students' work as adequately as they were supposed to have done due to the overwhelming numbers of students and the amount of other work that they had to do over and above teaching. Teacher 2, for instance, indicated, "... they (teachers) alternate the marking of books; today they mark books for this group, tomorrow they mark books for the other group..." As the teacher observes in this excerpt, teachers resorted to alternating the marking of students' work in order to cope with the pressure. This strategy cited by the teacher, well intentioned as it might have been, seems to present a few problems.

Marking as a way of giving feedback to students has some motivational incentives in that students are able to determine how they are faring and thus make adjustments in their work accordingly. However, marking, like all forms of feedback, is most effective when it is given soon after work has been turned in. Where students have to wait for days on end before they can get feedback on their work, as was the case in this study, the effect of feedback is not likely to be as effective. Therefore, it is unlikely that students whose work is only marked occasionally would be optimally motivated. It thus does not seem to overstretch the argument to conclude that such repeated experiences of students not getting feedback on their work as often as they should have, may have led some of them to consciously or unconsciously, experience a gradual detachment from the school environment. Earlier studies (e.g. Garnier et al., 1997; Alexander et al., 2001; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Jimerson et al., 2000) have demonstrated that dropping out of school is not an instant occurrence, but a gradual process that builds up over a period of time.

In the following excerpt, Teacher 4 introduces another strategy which teachers employed to cope with the marking of students' work in those large classes: "We have large classes; some even go up to 70 pupils. When it comes to marking, you just have to mark and forgo other things..." This excerpt seems to indicate that teachers sometimes had to compromise some aspects of teaching in order to find a slot in which they could mark students' work. Teacher 4 seems to communicate this meaning in the line where she indicates, "...you just have to mark and forgo other things..." In

addition to suggesting a compromise in the teaching standards, this statement also seems to indicate that teachers sometimes skipped giving lessons in order to catch up with the marking. Skipping a lesson and catching up later is fine, in fact, it is a strategy I would consider useful, however, in a situation as was found in this study where numbers of students were hovering around 80 in one class, one wonders to what extent teachers could skip lessons and catch up later. It seems therefore, that this whole strategy of skipping lessons in order to catch up with marking amounted to watering down the standards of teaching.

Teacher 1 in the next excerpt seems to confirm the compromises that teachers made in the teaching standards as a result of large students' numbers, "...in a way you are able to achieve the objectives of the lessons but not to the fullest..." As the teacher indicates in this excerpt, fully achieving the objectives of lessons was difficult because of the large numbers of students. This assertion which Teacher 1 makes also seems to suggest that teachers might have glossed over some aspects of lessons to be able to cover all the areas that they needed to cover in the syllabi. In that sense, teachers might have been more concerned about getting through the syllabi rather than about ensuring that students got the content of the lessons.

In the latter part of the excerpt, Teacher 1 indicates that due to the large numbers of students, teachers also compromised the way they assessed and evaluated students: "...even when it comes to assessing the kids, it becomes very difficult, unless you give a class test..." The message of compromising the assessment and evaluation standards seems to come out in the line where the teacher indicates, "Unless you give a test". Here the teacher seems to indicate a departure from the "normal" comprehensive way of assessing students which involves the use of various forms of evaluation including rigorous continuous assessment involving different projects and exercises. From the way Teacher 1 speaks about tests, it seems they were used as an objective (multiple choice) method of testing students' recall, rather than as a tool to test the higher cognitive abilities of students. Objective tests might have been attractive to teachers because they are easier to mark and score.

Teacher 1 gave another indication of compromises that teachers embraced as they tried to assess and evaluate students in those large classes, "...I like giving them (students) class exercises but again it is very difficult to cover all areas in those class exercises..." Here the teacher indicates that she makes compromises in the areas that she covers when she gives a test, "it is very difficult to cover all the areas". Again this seems to communicate a sense of watering down the teaching standards whereby teachers did not assess students in all areas due to large numbers.

Regarding the findings from the parents, there was a sense of parents having lost faith in teachers. Most parents indicated that they were not satisfied with the quality of teaching that their children received from teachers. M/Parent 3, for instance, observed, "...these days teachers are only interested in getting to the end of the month so that they can get their pay. The teaching has become devalued". For this parent, the drop in the educational standards is as a result of teachers losing the passion for teaching. He indicates that teachers were only driven by the love for the money they got and not by the love of the job. Looking at the earlier indications that teachers made about them compromising the teaching in order to cope with the large numbers of students that they had to handle, it would appear the observations that M/Parent 3 makes here about the teaching standards going down are valid. However, the blame that M/Parent 3 places on the teachers may also be indicative of the parent's obliviousness to the dynamics involved in the teaching-learning process in schools. The parent's state of ignorance about what went on in schools may be emanating from what I discussed earlier in chapter eight namely that parents did not collaborate with the teachers.

In the following excerpt, M/Parent 1 seems to even get more specific about the loss of value that parents saw in the present day education:

They (children) think because we only went up to grade seven and they went up to grade nine, they are so educated, but in actual fact I speak better English than them and I can write a letter in English which these grade nines cannot do.

The message that M/Parent 1 seems to communicate in the above excerpt is that the present day education has become so devalued that students cannot accomplish such basics as writing a letter even at the end of the ninth grade. To emphasise how

devalued the education has become, the parent makes a comparison with the way things were when he went to school years back; he rates a present day ninth grader to be lower in the level of knowledge than a seventh grader of his time. Thus in a way, the parent seems to be pouring scorn on today's devalued education. The observation that M/Parent 1 makes here seems to be in agreement with what dropouts and parents observed in chapter eight, namely that school was a waste of time because it made no difference in the lives of those who went through it. While the participants in chapter eight spoke about the futility of school in relation to finding jobs, it seems, going by M/Parent 1's observations in this chapter, the futility of education extended to the acquisition of knowledge- education did not necessarily make students knowledgeable.

In view of the loss of value in the current education which parents perceived, one parent, F/Parent 4 made an appeal to the government, "I would like to ask the government to devise a system whereby before progressing to higher grades, children will be allowed to know how to deal with lessons from the lower grades..." Implicitly, F/Parent 4 seems to be making an appeal for the introduction of remedial lessons for slow learners in schools. She seems to indicate that children were just progressing from one grade to another in a mechanical fashion without teachers ensuring that they understood the lessons in the earlier grades. Again, the parent's observations seem valid in light of what the teachers indicated earlier namely that they were not able to attend to the individual needs of students because they were overwhelmed by the huge numbers of students.

F/Parent 4 continues in the final part of the excerpt, "This is not motivating at all". Through this phrase, the parent seems to indicate that parents were not encouraged to send their children to school or keep them in school because of the loss of value in the present day education. This interpretation seems to link well with the earlier findings in chapter eight where teachers and dropouts indicated that some parents involved their children in income generating activities at the expense of schooling. It seems therefore, partly, the parents' lack of enthusiasm in ensuring that their children attended school regularly might have emanated from the perceived loss of value in education. In order to shed further light on how the large numbers of students which

teachers had to handle in this study may have influenced students to drop out of school, I in the next section turn to Finn's (1989) school dropout models.

9.2.1 Application of Finn's school dropout models

The two models that Finn (1989) puts across explain school dropout by relating it to the circumstances obtaining within the school environment. These are the participation- identification model, and the frustration-self esteem model. I begin by discussing how the participation-identification model may be applied to explaining how large students' numbers may have influenced students to drop out of school.

9.2.1.1 Participation-identification model

In the participation- identification model, Finn (1989) argues that because of feelings of being alienated from the school which often arise out of failure by teachers to involve students in school activities in the classroom and/or outside, the students stop identifying themselves with the school environment. Accordingly, Finn argues that students who do not identify with the school environment tend to be more prone to drop out of school.

As far as the findings of this study are concerned, there is a likelihood that students may have stopped identifying themselves with school because of not receiving the individualized attention that they may have needed to participate in classroom activities. In other words, when the students' eagerness to learn was not met with corresponding willingness to help from teachers, the likely result may have been frustration which may have led to disengagement from school on the part of students. Teachers in my study indicated that in the overcrowded classes which they had to handle, they were not able to attend to the individual needs of students. For instance, Teacher 2 indicated, "...a lot of children get discouraged because they go for a long time without having individualised attention from teachers..." Similarly, dropouts indicated that teachers did not give them individual help in the areas where they needed it.

The likely fate of the students who did not actively participate in the activities of the classroom, as was found to be the case in this study, is that they may have gradually started disengaging themselves from the classroom activities and eventually the whole school. Being sidelined from the classroom activities may have led the concerned students to think that their presence in the classroom did not matter. In other words, when teachers sent these messages of abandonment to students, the likely outcome may have been for the students to live up to the expectations of the teachers; they may have decided to disappear from the school since even with their presence, they were “invisible” to the teachers, anyway. Voelkl (1997) provides support for this argument through her observation that disidentification from school is in part linked to the extent to which students participate in classroom activities. Suh and Satcher (2005) report similar findings. Patterson et al. (2007/2008) also argue that students tend to get alienated from school by teaching methods that do not put them at the centre of learning activities.

Other studies (e.g. Garnier et al., 1997; Alexander et al., 2001; Jimerson et al., 2000) have demonstrated that dropping out of school does not happen suddenly; it is a process of gradual disengagement over a period of time. Bridgeland et al. (2006) also argue that students who are on the trajectory of dropping out of school begin to show signs of losing interest in school long before they drop out. To further elucidate how the large numbers of students may have influenced students to drop out of school, I turn in the next section to the other school dropout model, the frustration-self esteem model from Finn’s (1989) work.

9.2.1.2 Frustration-self esteem model

In the frustration-self esteem model, Finn (1989) argues that as a result of perpetual poor academic performance which teachers fail to remedy, students get frustrated with school, resulting in them having a low academic self worth. Often as Finn further argues, academic frustration and lowered self esteem result in students engaging in problem behaviours which invariably draw them out of school.

In chapter eight, I indicated that one of the factors that participants attributed school dropout to in this study was bad influence from peers. Teachers particularly indicated that students who were on the trajectory of dropping out of school often joined peer groups which engaged in problem behaviours such as beer drinking, smoking, engaging in sexual activities, and so on. In addition to peer pressure, teachers indicated that students who were about to drop out of school exhibited general signs of detachment from school through such behaviours as refusal to participate in classroom activities, violence to fellow students, truancy, and rudeness to teachers (see chapter six).

Looking at the deviant behaviours which teachers cited as indicators that students were getting detached from school, it seems teachers also viewed these problem behaviours exhibited by students as causes of school dropout rather than as consequences of something else. According to Finn's (1989) frustration- self esteem model, students drop out of school due to poor academic performance which leads to frustration and lowered self esteem. In this study, the teachers indicated that attending to students' individual academic needs was difficult because of the large numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. This failure by teachers to attend to individual academic needs of students may thus have led to frustration and lowered self esteem of students. Inevitably as Finn argues, this may have resulted in problem behaviours which were rightly identified by teachers in this study as indicators that students were on the verge of dropping out.

Thus in this case, problem behaviours and other signs of losing interest in school that were exhibited by future dropouts might have been an exhibition of students' frustration. Having failed to have their persistent individual academic problems attended to by teachers, the concerned students might have resorted to problem behaviour as a sign of revolting against the school system. In relation to this argument, Bridgeland et al. (2006) suggest that improving instruction to support students who are struggling academically can help improve the retention of students in schools until graduation. Thus, in my view, students' problem behaviours should not be taken at face value; there is need to understand their precursors. In this regard, peer pressure which was found to be one of the factors that led adolescents to drop out

of school in this study, may have been an indication of a much deeper underlying problem.

Dropouts, parents, and teachers alike indicated that students were prematurely lured out of school through peer networks that embraced activities that ran counter to the requirements of schooling. In relation to Finn's frustration-self esteem model, peer pressure may also have been a sign by students of switching from the school environment which did not fully accept them to the peer networks where they may have felt readily accepted. In other words, students who may have got frustrated with the education system may have found solace in peer networks. Ellenbogen and Chamberland's (1997) findings seem to support this argument; they observe that students who were about to drop out of school tended to associate more with out-of-school peer networks. To this effect, the researchers argue, "development of an out of school friendship network may become a salient factor in the disengagement process during adolescence" (Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997, p. 363). Other scholars (e.g. Janosz et al., 1997; Parker & Asher, 1987) also speak of peer networks as avenues through which students on the trajectory of dropping out escape from unpleasant school environments. Alexander et al. (2001) summarize this scenario well, "dropout...is a means of escape from an environment that is psychologically punishing" (p. 763). In the next section, I discuss how the lack of a students' support system in the school influenced school dropout.

9.3 Lack of students' support system in school

There was an indication by the dropouts in this study that there was no students' support system at the school they attended. Most of the dropouts seemed to express surprise at the prospect of having a students' support system in school. For instance, F/Dropout 7 indicated during a focus group discussion, "There was no such office in the school..." As can be seen from the assertion of the participant in the excerpt, the participant did not seem to know how to refer to the guidance and counselling office; she merely calls it "such office". This would seem to further indicate the non availability of the students' support system at Bbombo Basic School. Another dropout, M/Dropout 3 observed, "At my school? There was nothing like that". This

expression also seems to indicate that the participant was surprised at the prospect of having a department within a school which attended to students' problems. The question that M/Dropout 3 opens the statement with seems to indicate his surprise "at my school?" Like F/Dropout 7, this participant does not refer to the students' support office by name; he merely calls it "that". This seems to accentuate the message that these dropouts did not have a students' support system at Bbombo Basic. These findings seem to corroborate the findings of the Bridgeland et al. (2006) study which indicate that students who dropped out were often not aware of the assistance given to students by their schools.

The teachers in this study also indicated the lack of a well-functioning guidance and counselling department at Bbombo Basic. The assertion in the following excerpt from Teacher 2's narrative summarizes the situation at Bbombo Basic with regard to the students' support system:

...we have a counsellor in the school although he does not yet have an office to operate from- he operates from this, my office (Deputy Headmistress's office). I wouldn't say the guidance and counselling department is very active. It is not yet popular- students do not yet know the use of this service.

In this excerpt, Teacher 2, who also happens to be the deputy headmistress of the school "confesses" to not having an active guidance and counselling department: "I wouldn't say the guidance and counselling department is active...students do not yet know the use of this service". Coming from a headmistress who is not just a common teacher, but an administrator in the school as well, the indication of having a malfunctioning students' support department even carries more weight. Even if the teacher seems to slightly down play the lack of the service by saying that the guidance and counselling department is "not very active", it seems the problem might actually be bigger than that. We see the indication of the gravity of the problem in the first line where Teacher 2 points out that the school does not have a guidance and counselling office. Both guidance and counselling are activities which require a high level of privacy for them to be carried out properly. Therefore, where there is no office space, it seems to be a forgone conclusion that no meaningful guidance and counselling can be carried out. It is no wonder that the dropouts interviewed in this study indicated

ignorance of the existence of a guidance and counselling department at Bbombo Basic School.

As the teachers indicated, the guidance and counselling department at Bbombo Basic only existed in name; it did not perform its intended duties due to lack of office space where the school counsellor could operate from. However, it seems doubtful that even with adequate office space, the school counsellor would have been able to execute his duties as a counsellor in that he had as much teaching load as the other teachers who were not counsellors. Thus, it would appear, in addition to lack of office space, the low staffing levels were also a contributing factor to not having a well functioning students' support system at Bbombo Basic. Makwinja-Morara (2007) identified poor counselling services in schools as one of the reasons why students dropped out of school in Botswana. In the Bridgeland et al (2006) study, one of the recommendations that the researchers make to lower school dropout is to establish active guidance and counselling departments in schools. Suh and Satcher (2005) also report that guidance and counselling services help create an atmosphere in schools where students feel cared for and thus maximise their chances of staying until graduation.

The revelation of a malfunctional students' support system at Bbombo Basic School in my study seems to raise some concerns in as far as the way the school responded to the welfare and well-being of students was concerned. This is especially so considering that the dropouts I interviewed who also attended this same school indicated not ever hearing about the existence of a guidance and counselling department in the school. I cannot help but wonder how many students of those who had dropped out prematurely at Bbombo Basic would not have dropped out if the support system had been in good working order. In relation to this argument, the American School Counsellor Association [ASCA],(2003) emphasises that school counsellors play a vital role in guiding students through their school careers by attending not only to their academic needs, but to their social, career, and personal ones as well. School counsellors thus play a critically important role in ensuring that an atmosphere that is supportive of schooling is created in a school.

Early in the study of human development, scholars (e.g. Erikson, 1968) had already become cognizant of the developmental challenges that were associated with adolescence. Erikson argues that the developmental challenges that characterise the adolescence stage mainly emanate from the biological and social developmental changes that young people experience as they transition into adulthood. Thus, among many other things, the hallmark of having students' support systems in schools is to ensure that students are constantly helped to find their developmental balance whenever they are beset by the many inevitable developmental vicissitudes that are associated with the adolescence stage. Therefore, not having a students' support system in a school where there are adolescents or failure to use one appropriately, can spell a number of problems among which school dropout seems probable.

One of the themes that I dealt with earlier when I discussed school dropout in relation to cultural practices (see chapter seven) is the theme of "girls being at the mercy of the dictates of their cultures". Most of these young women seemed to convey a sense of having no way of escaping the requirements of their patriarchal culture. Further, it appears that these young women had nobody to talk to about those concerns. The situation need not remain like that in schools; students need to have adults, who they can talk to about their various problems, including the cultural injustices that they may get subjected to. Bridgeland et al. (2006) support this argument and suggest that one way to help reduce school dropout in schools is to ensure that each student has a strong relationship with at least one adult in the school. The ASCA (2003) also argues that school counsellors should serve as young people's confidantes on social, academic and other personal matters.

Guidance and counselling departments could also help address issues concerning counselling teenage mothers who may return to school after giving birth. My study has indicated, if broadly, that the policy which allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school and/or return after giving birth has not been successful. Teachers indicated that some teenage mothers, who were allowed back in school after giving birth, ended up getting pregnant again, sometimes repeatedly. What seems to come out of the teachers' assertions is that they did not seem to see the problem of repeated adolescence pregnancy as a school's responsibility. Teachers seemed to view repeated

teen pregnancy as a community problem, as indicated by Teacher 2, "...the main reason why this (girls repeatedly getting pregnant) happens is that the environment where these children live does not change even after they have experienced their first pregnancy". The attitude of teachers as exemplified in the above excerpt seems to run counter to what studies (e.g. Bridgeland et al., 2006; Suh & Satcher, 2005) have found namely that school counsellors play a critical role in helping adolescents cope with their social and personal challenges.

One cannot completely blame the young women for repeatedly getting pregnant, as teachers observed in my study. It seems likely that these young mothers who return into school following a pregnancy, under go a lot of pressure not only in the schools that they attend, but in the communities where they live as well. Firstly, these young women are likely to have to contend with the pressures of adjusting to their new life as young mothers. Secondly, they are likely to have to contend with the likely scorn, ridicule, and stigmatization by other students in the school who may be aware of their condition as early mothers. Finally, these young mothers are likely to have to continually resist the likely overtures for marriage from a patriarchal society which largely places the value of a woman on marriage and motherhood (see Richards, 1956; Rasing, 2001). These and other likely challenging facets in the lives of adolescent mothers who return to school, arguably require constant provision of well defined coping strategies which school counsellors can see to.

What has come out in the discussion of the findings in this dissertation is that school dropout factors are inextricably interwoven with one another. In other words, it seems that there are no purely cultural or family or community or school dropout factors. The school dropout problem seems to connectedly weave itself in all these areas in ways that are too complex to grasp using simplistic cause-effect relationships. Thus, for instance, while the teachers in this study may have been justified in attributing the problem of girls repeatedly getting pregnant to "bad" conditions in the communities where they (adolescents) lived, this also seems to indicate that teachers may have been oblivious to the role that schools could play in alleviating the problem of adolescence pregnancy. I indicated earlier in the chapter that in order to ensure success in the teaching-learning process, the home and school environments need to

complement each other. Therefore, teachers also have a role to play in providing support to the adolescent mothers who are re-admitted into school so as to ensure that they do not repeat the mistake of falling pregnant.

In my view, therefore, without strengthening guidance and counselling departments in schools, it is unlikely that the educational policy which allows adolescent mothers to return to school in Zambia will yield much meaningful results. In fact, if not well handled through well planned counselling programmes in schools, this policy could easily paradoxically exacerbate the very problem it is trying to alleviate. There is a possibility, for instance, that when other students who have never been pregnant see that nothing really happens to their counterparts who have fallen pregnant; they carry on with school as normal, they may see no point in abstaining from early unsafe sexual practices. Thus, to prevent this from happening, schools should intensify school counselling programmes to all students so that the consequences of engaging in early unprotected sex are constantly pointed out.

The findings of a study conducted by Smyth and Hattam (2002) in Australia on school cultures seem to also provide an appropriate framework for understanding the limitations emanating from not having students' support systems in schools. Smyth and Hattam describe three types of school culture: an aggressive school culture; a passive school culture; and an active school culture. The aggressive school culture, the researchers argue, represented a hostile school environment in which students who came into contact with the school rules were uncompromisingly thrown out of school. The passive school culture was one where students were treated indifferently; they did not receive encouragement, nor did they get reprimanded for wrong doing. The active school culture on the other hand, was found to provide a warm atmosphere where the concerns of students were proactively attended to by teachers. It seems the situation that I found at Bbombo Basic School where the students' support system was non-functional, fits the passive school culture profile. Smyth and Hattam did not indicate in their study whether passive school cultures were only found in those schools which did not have students' support systems or whether they were also found in schools that had support systems. However, it seems logical to conclude that a passive school culture is more likely to thrive in schools without students' support systems than in

those schools where support systems are available and active. In the next section, I draw conclusions from this chapter on how the school environment influenced adolescents to drop out of school.

9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings relating to how school dropout was influenced by the school environment. Through discussing these findings, I have addressed the fourth question of this study which sought to find out how schools influenced the choices that adolescents made about schooling. I have demonstrated that the large numbers of students which teachers had to handle in one class made it difficult for them to give students individual attention and to actively involve them in lessons. This scenario seemed to make some students gradually get detached from the school environment until they eventually dropped out.

With regard to the non availability of a students' support system in the school, I have argued that students were likely to feel alienated from the school environment where there were no adults such as school counsellors who students could confide in on academic and/or non academic challenges that they may have encountered. Consequently, I have proposed as have other studies (e.g. ASCA, 2003) that students' support systems in schools are a critical element in ensuring that students stay in school till graduation.

In view of the foregoing, it seems clear why Smyth and Hattam (2002) suggest that researchers need to start being critical of what goes on in schools. Research that is critical of schools as Smyth and Hattam have indicated is still in its infancy and part of the reason for this seems to be attributable to the "innocence" that has been erroneously ascribed to schools over the years. With the new research findings to which I include the findings of my study, beginning to indicate the role that schools play in prematurely pushing students out of school, however, the field of educational psychology is likely to see an increase in studies venturing to understand how school environments may contribute to school dropout. To this end, Lee and Burkam (2003) recommend that researchers should stop investigating factors that lead to school

dropout in relation to individual students and their backgrounds, but that they should focus more on investigating how the school environment may lead to school dropout. Consequently, Lee and Burkam (2003) view the students who drop out of school as victims who are victimised out of school by unsupportive school environments.

Finally, the discussion of the findings in this chapter has further demonstrated that the factors that influence adolescents to drop out of school are inextricably interwoven. While my focus in this chapter centred on how the school environment influenced school dropout, other factors emanating from families and communities of dropouts inevitably came into play. In the next chapter, I present the conclusions that I have drawn from the whole study.

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CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated how as a complex problem, school dropout cannot be well understood if it is studied in fragments; it requires a more holistic approach. Specifically, I have shown how factors emanating from family, community, cultural practices, and school, all contributed in influencing the choices that adolescents made about schooling. I have divided this conclusion chapter into five parts. Firstly, I present a summary of the main findings that have emerged out of this study. Secondly, I present a set of recommendations arising from this work. Thirdly, I make a presentation of the limitations that constrained this study in one way or another. In the fourth part, I present suggestions of areas that require further research. Finally, in section five, I present the closure of the dissertation.

10.2 Summary of the main findings

My main aim in this study was to find out what factors influenced adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in a rural site of southern Zambia. In order to have an in-depth understanding of these factors, I used qualitative research methodology. Specifically, I used the IPA method as the analytical framework to arrive at meanings regarding how the participants perceived the problem of school dropout. In order to get a broader and deeper understanding of school dropout, I integrated the findings from dropouts, parents, and teachers. This integration of the findings also provided an opportunity to triangulate the findings so as to increase the credibility of the study (see Patton, 2002). In this regard therefore, the hallmark of the contribution that my work has made to the study of school dropout lies in its having used a qualitative, holistic, interpretative approach.

Thus, my study as Smith, Harre and Langenhove (1995) argue belongs to a category of studies in psychology that present a new approach, an approach that departs from

the quantification approaches that are common with traditional psychology. As Pedersen (1999) explains, the new approach in psychology focuses on:

Understanding and description more than measuring, counting, or predicting; meaning rather than causation or frequencies; interpretation rather than statistical analysis; language, discourse, and symbols rather than reduction of data to numbers; holistic rather than atomistic perspectives; particularities rather than universals; cultural context rather than context-free perspectives; and subjectivity as well as objectivity (p.4).

Three sets of themes emerged from this study as factors, which influenced adolescents to drop out of school. These were: cultural factors; family and community factors; and school factors. First, I present a summary of themes that emerged under the cultural factors.

10.2.1 Cultural factors

Though male dropouts were also affected, cultural factors mainly affected female dropouts. Three themes emerged here as follows: initiation influences girls to drop out of school; parents forcing their daughters into early marriages; and pregnancy as a route to marriage.

The findings of this study indicated that the practice of the female initiation rite had a negative effect on girls' commitment to schooling because of its emphasis on teaching girls their marriage and motherhood roles. Parents interviewed in this study viewed the female initiation rite as an important means through which girls who enter puberty are taught their roles as fully fledged women of society. As a rite of passage that constitutes an important mode of transmitting the patriarchal teaching to the young women who come of age, initiation was found to influence the way young women constructed their identity. Specifically, the findings indicated that the female initiation rite influenced the young women to get into early marriages and/or get pregnant in their quest to put into practice what they were taught during the rite.

With regard to the second theme, this study revealed that a number of girls in Haacizibe Village dropped out of school due to being forced into early marriages by

their parents. The dropouts and teachers attributed these forced marriages to parents' desire for lobola paid when their daughters got married. On the other hand, parents seemed to blame school dropout on their daughters who decided to elope with their lovers. In this respects, parents seemed to project the blame of early marriages onto their daughters. However, largely, forced marriages appeared to reveal the patriarchal culture of Haacizibe Village that seemed to regard girls' roles as revolving around marriage and motherhood. Thus, the female initiation rite appeared to be directly linked to preparing young women who came of age for their marriage and motherhood responsibilities.

The third and final theme that emerged among cultural factors was pregnancy as a route to marriage. The findings indicated that a number of girls in Haacizibe Village did not have a chance to go back to school after falling pregnant because a number of them were forced to get married to the men who impregnated them. Because of this practice, teachers indicated, albeit broadly, that the government policy that now allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school and/or return after giving birth, had not yielded good results. As was the case with early marriages, however, parents seemed to blame their daughters for dropping out of school following pregnancy. The parents indicated that their daughters usually eloped with the men who impregnated them. Again looking at the findings from teachers and dropouts, which indicated that parents were the ones who forced their daughters out of school into early marriages, it seems likely that parents were merely engaging in some defence mechanism by projecting the blame of school dropout onto their daughters.

Against the background of these findings, it seems logical to conclude that among other things, cultural issues such as these may constitute a significant part in the explanation of why statistics in annual surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in Zambia (see chapter one), have consistently shown school completion rates to be lowest in rural settings among female adolescents. In the next section, I present a summary of factors emanating from family and community that were found to influence adolescents to drop out of school.

10.2.2 Family and community factors

Unlike the cultural school dropout factors which mainly affected female dropouts, family and community factors affected male dropouts as much as they did females. The following themes emerged here: lack of role models; education is a waste of time; bad influence from peers; lack of parental involvement in their children's education; and low socioeconomic status.

With regard to the lack of role models, all three categories of research participants in this study indicated that adolescents did not feel the urge to continue with school because there were no educated people in their families and in the communities where they lived who could inspire them to aspire after higher levels of education. In this study, most of the parents of the dropouts were themselves dropouts with educational levels ranging from no education at all to about the ninth grade (see chapter five). Closely linked to the theme of lack of role models, the dropouts and parents indicated that the pursuit of education was a waste of time because a number of people who completed school did not show any visible evidence of having benefited from education- they still suffered like everybody else. Thus, the dropouts and parents seemed to have become disillusioned about education being a means of attaining a higher social stratum. In connection with this theme, the teachers indicated that students were not motivated to apply themselves in school because the school syllabi were not responsive to the needs of the people in the communities. Thus, teachers recommended that practical subjects in schools be given more prominence.

The participants also cited bad influence from peers as one of the factors that influenced adolescents to drop out of school. Activities such as drinking, smoking, engaging in sexual activities, were cited as the most common ones that peer groups engaged in at the expense of schooling. Teachers indicated that engaging in bad behaviour was an indicator that a student was on the trajectory of dropping out of school. Thus, it appears students who turned to peer networks at the expense of schooling may have done so because they found schooling to be unfulfilling.

Another theme that emerged here was the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. Dropouts and teachers indicated that parents were not actively involved in the education of their children. The parents' lack of involvement was mainly manifested in two ways. Firstly, through their failure to visit their children's schools to find out from teachers how their children were doing in school. The findings revealed that the only time parents visited the schools attended by their children was when they were summoned by teachers to attend to disciplinary problems of their children or when there were periodical school meetings where parents were invited. The second manifestation of parents' indifference to their children's education was in parents' inability to create atmospheres at home which were supportive of learning. A number of dropouts indicated that they were often overloaded with house chores, which left them with no time to study or do their homework. Further, the dropouts and teachers indicated that parents did not push their children to attend school even when they stayed away. Indications from the findings were that parents were not enthusiastic about their children's schooling because of their perception that school did not make any difference in the lives of the people who went through it.

The final theme which emerged among the family and community factors, which influenced school dropout was low socioeconomic status. Haacizibe Village, the site where the participants of this study were drawn from, is a poor society where most people live below the poverty line (see chapter five). As a result of poverty, the participants indicated that many school going boys and girls in Haacizibe Village were involved in a number of income generating activities which invariably drew them away from school. The findings indicated that parents were supportive of their children engaging themselves in income generating activities because they (children) supplemented the usually insufficient family incomes. In addition to poverty, it seems dropouts engaged in income generating activities due to the common perception that education was a waste of time. Thus, in this respect, it seems dropouts and parents had become disillusioned about education being a means through which people could attain higher economic statuses. In the next section, the final one among the major findings of this study, I summarize the findings dealing with the way the school environment was found to influence school dropout.

10.2.3 School factors

Two themes, namely no help from teachers, and lack of a students' support system in school, emerged here. With regard to the first theme, dropouts indicated that they did not get any help from teachers on aspects of lessons where they needed further clarification. Dropouts also indicated that teachers did not check their books to determine how they were faring. Teachers indicated that they were not able to give students individualized attention due to the large numbers of students that they had to handle in one class. The large numbers of students also made it difficult for teachers to conduct remedial lessons for slow learners. Thirdly, the large classes made it difficult for teachers to mark students' work as regularly as they should have done. All these deficiencies seemed to put a number of students on the trajectory of dropping out of school. Most of the parents indicated that the teaching standards had fallen because teachers did not apply themselves fully in teaching their children. The falling educational standards indicated by the parents seemed plausible in view of the earlier observations by the dropouts and teachers that the teaching-learning process was compromised because of large numbers of students that teachers had to handle in one class. However, these findings also seemed to indicate that the parents were oblivious to the teaching-learning process that went on in schools.

Further, this study found out that Bbombo Basic School did not have a functioning students' support system that could provide guidance and counselling on various academic and non-academic challenges that students might have encountered. In this sense, students' challenges seemed to have been left unattended to. These unattended to problems might have resulted in some of the students gradually disengaging or detaching themselves from school until they finally dropped out.

Arising from these findings, I make some recommendations in the next section which I feel would be beneficial to the education system in Zambia. I have divided these recommendations into three categories. The first category deals with recommendations for cultural practices. In the second category, I present recommendations for families and communities. Finally, in the third category, I make recommendations for policy formulation by the Ministry of Education.

10.3 Recommendations for cultural practices

- i. The female dropouts indicated that the almost exclusive focus on teaching girls how to perform the sexual act and other marriage roles during the rite influences girls to have a desire to leave school prematurely so that they can put into practice what they have been taught. Initiation is an important means by which girls in the traditional Tonga society are taught their roles as fully fledged women. Thus, there seems to be need to perform the female initiation rite with caution especially considering that it is performed on young females who still have to pursue formal schooling. In this regard, traditional practices need to be linked to global trends on education of girls and women. Specifically, there is need to ensure that cultural beliefs and practices support the pronouncements made in the 1990 EFA campaign (see UNESCO, 2000) and MDGs (see United Nations, 2007) to promote girl-child education. This study has established that school dropout permeates all facets of life including culture, like an unbreakable thread.
- ii. Traditional leaders may find the use of mentorship as a useful tool to motivate young girls to pursue formal education. Young women, for instance, might get motivated if older women from their tribe, better still from their families, who have been initiated but have also been successful in their schooling and professional careers were presented to them. These women would act as role models for the young women so that they would know that initiation does not necessarily mean that they should embrace marriage and motherhood at the expense of formal schooling and career dreams.
- iii. Dropouts and teachers in this study indicated that it was common practice in Haacizibe Village for parents to pull their daughters out of school into marriage. Parents may benefit from education on the negative effects of interrupting the young women's school careers.

In addition to these recommendations, I present in the next section recommendations for families and communities.

10.4 Recommendations for families and communities

- i. The participants in this study indicated that a number of students dropped out of school because they did not have any people in their families or in the communities to look up to for inspiration. It therefore seems that identifying people within families and communities who can mentor young people might encourage young people to stay in school till completion. Where these inspiring role models are not available in families and the immediate community, role models from other societies can be used vicariously. Schoolteachers might help in this respect.
- ii. The participants in this study indicated that parents did not take the time to visit the schools attended by their children, nor did they create atmospheres that were supportive of schooling at home. Students only spend a small portion of their time at school; most of their time is spent at home and so the home environment needs to be supportive of schooling. In order for this to happen, there needs to be constant collaboration between parents and teachers; not only when there are disciplinary problems or during periodical school meetings as was found to be the case in this study. In this regard, the school environment and home environment should be viewed as complementary to each other rather than as being mutually exclusive.
- iii. Findings in this study have indicated that a number of students abandoned school due to engaging in income generating activities. It may be helpful for traditional leaders to put in place traditional laws to protect children's rights to education. It is the duty of parents to ensure that their children attend school every single day of the school term, teachers cannot do it alone; they need the support of the parents.

Finally, in the next section I present recommendations for policy formulation by the Ministry of Education.

10.5 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- i. Teachers in this study indicated that parents did not complement their efforts in encouraging students to apply themselves in school. Additionally, teachers indicated that the government policy that allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school had not worked effectively because parents usually forced their daughters to marry the men who impregnated them. In view of this, it seems necessary for teachers and the Ministry of Education at large, to sensitize parents on the detrimental effects of pushing their daughters into early marriages. In this regard, having a legislative body within the Ministry of Education that protects girls from victimization by families and/or cultural practices might go a long way in emancipating the girl child and women. In the Ministry of Education policy document (see Ministry of Education, 1996), mention is made that legislation would be enacted to ensure that anybody who withdrew children from school before completion would be punished. In view of the findings of this study that have indicated that some parents in Haacizibe Village still forced their school-going daughters into early marriages, it would appear this piece of legislation is not being enforced as it should be.
- ii. Teachers in this study indicated that due to low staffing levels and overcrowding in classrooms, it was difficult for them to attend to the individual needs of students. It seems therefore that the Ministry of Education needs to accompany the campaign for Education for All with a corresponding expansion of the capacity of schools both in terms of additional infrastructure and in terms of teaching staff. Such an expansion might also enable teachers to offer remedial lessons.
- iii. The dropouts interviewed in this study indicated that they had never heard of a guidance and counselling department at their former school. This shortcoming emanated from not having adequate infrastructure in the school and from low staffing levels. Therefore, there seems to be need to establish well organized students' support systems in schools where students can go for guidance and counselling on various issues that may challenge them. Having guidance and

counselling departments in schools might lessen the chances of students dropping out of school because problems such as delinquent behaviour, absenteeism, motivational problems and others that often lead to that outcome may be proactively dealt with.

In addition, counselling services are required in schools in view of the indication by teachers in this study that the Ministry of Education policy that allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school and/or return after giving birth had not worked well in that a number of returnee students ended up getting pregnant again. Thus, there seems to be need for guidance and counselling departments in schools to have an intensified focus on these young mothers who return to school; they need to be given counselling when they re-enter school and whenever they may need it till they graduate. As can be expected, it may not be easy for these adolescent mothers to cope because they may have to contend with many pressures.

Firstly, adolescent mothers may have to contend with the pressures of adjusting to their new life as young mothers. Secondly, they may have to contend with the likely scorn and ridicule by other students who may be aware of their condition as early mothers. Thirdly, they may have to contend with the school workload as well as the numerous demands of motherhood. All these challenges in the lives of returnee students require constant provision of well-defined coping strategies, which school counsellors may provide. In addition to all these reasons, it is important that counselling departments continue to provide accurate information on the dangers and disadvantages of engaging in early sexual activities so that the policy which allows teenage mothers to get re-enrolled in school is not misunderstood. There is a possibility that when other students see that their counterparts who engaged themselves early in sexual activities are still able to carry on with school as normal, they may see no point in abstaining from sexual activities. To deal with this possible problem, guidance and counselling departments may need to be proactive in their approach by providing sex education to students in schools.

- iv. Lack of motivating role models in the families and communities where dropouts lived was cited by a number of participants as one of the reasons some students dropped out of school. Students might therefore benefit if teachers from time to time arranged to have educated people who have excelled talk to boys and girls who are still in school as a way of motivating them. This way all children (including those who come from families where they may have no inspiring role models), may benefit. In this respect, teachers need to pay particular attention to inviting (while ensuring that they do not neglect the boys) more female role models because girls, as this and many other studies have found, seem to be more prone to dropping out of school than boys mainly due to patriarchal cultural practices which do not seem to favour the education of girls and women.
- v. In order to make education more relevant to the lives of students and hence more interesting, there seems to be need for the Ministry of Education to lay a considerable amount of emphasis on practical subjects which students can put to use in the communities where they live. Dropouts and parents indicated that education did not make any difference in the lives of people who went through it. Teachers also observed that if the school syllabi were more in tune with the needs of the communities, students may have been more interested in staying in school until graduation. In promoting practical subjects, however, the Ministry of Education needs to be cautious not to let the emphasis on practical subjects overshadow academic subjects. I should clarify that what I am suggesting here is not a shift of focus from academic subjects to practical/vocational subjects; what I am proposing based on the suggestions of the participants, is merely a balance between the two- it is not an “either” “or” situation. In this competitive modern world, academic subjects remain critically important.

Each study, no matter how conscientiously it may be planned, is bound to encounter minor, sometimes even major challenges, which may limit the research process in some way. While I have been able to generate in this study some useful findings, which led to the above listed recommendations, the research process was not a smooth

sailing one. Thus, in the next section, I present some constraints which limited this study.

10.6 Limitations of the study

The first limitation emanates from the methodology that I used. While I triangulated three data sources (dropouts, parents, and teachers), which increased the credibility of my findings, I still cannot generalise the findings of this study to the whole population due to the small qualitative sample that I used.

Secondly, I experienced some difficulties when interviewing female parents about the practice of the female initiation rite. While the parents indicated to me that they regarded the initiation rite as an important rite of passage that young women who came of age needed to pass through for them to know what was required of them as fully fledged women of society, it seems that these parents had reservations talking to me about the subject in detail. I interpreted the reservation of these women as emanating from the fact that I was male and young enough to have been their son. In addition, I am a member the same tribe as they. Thus, these aspects may have triggered feelings of blood ties in the women towards me, which may have then made the subject of initiation rites to fall in the category of things that were taboo to discuss with me. In retrospect, I feel a female co-researcher of an age as close as possible to the participants' would have been able to gather more detail from these women about the female initiation rite. While not crippling my study in any way, I feel this is a limitation which future studies on the subject need to be aware of.

Thirdly, my interpretation of the data was mainly at the social comparison level where I sought to deepen the understanding of school dropout by comparing dropouts' responses with those of their parents and teachers. In this respect, I may have foregone some depth in interpretation which I might have attained had I engaged in the more metaphorical interpretations. However, as Smith (2004) indicates, social comparison in IPA is an acceptable level of data interpretation in its own right. Smith further points out that even among the 'experienced' users of IPA, attaining deeply

metaphorical levels of interpretation remains a rarity which only few scholars manage to achieve. Thus, according to Smith, a 'good enough' level of interpretation for a student would be at the social comparison level. He indicates:

...I would expect a student to be producing interpretation at something like the first level...social comparisons, and would be pleased, though not requiring, an analysis ...in terms of the metaphors used (Smith, 2004, p. 46).

Other studies, for instance, Reid et al. (2009) made use of social comparisons by comparing what the patients and caregivers observed about their experiences with an incurable cancer. Notwithstanding this, Smith (2004) and Brocki and Wearden (2006) observe that determining the acceptable level of interpretation in IPA remains a challenge.

In light of the limited literature on the subject of school dropout in Africa, I have largely relied on literature from Europe, Australia, and North America to situate the findings of my study. Thus, while my findings have largely been corroborated by these foreign studies, caution has to be taken on the applicability of this foreign literature to the Zambian situation because of inevitable cultural diversities.

Finally, looking back at the research process that I engaged in, there are two things that I would have done differently. Firstly, I would have made the sample much smaller to allow for more profound metaphorical interpretation of data. Secondly, I would have engaged a female co-researcher to interview the female participants. This might have yielded richer responses from the participants.

Being one of the few studies that have investigated the problem of school dropout in Africa from a holistic standpoint, my study revealed a number of interesting issues that require further investigation in future research. In the next section, thus, I present suggestions of some of these areas that need further research.

10.7 Suggestions for further research

Based on the findings from this study, the following are some of the areas that I feel need further research:

- i. This study has indicated that issues of students' support systems in schools may not be well appreciated in Zambia. It would therefore, be helpful to conduct more research to generate findings to show the benefits that come from having these support systems in schools. To this end, conducting comparative studies of the school dropout problem in schools that have guidance and counselling departments and those that do not, would add value to the study of school dropout.
- ii. Conducting a comparative study of academic self concept between girls who have passed through initiation and those who have not would also be interesting. Many studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between academic self concept and academic performance. In view of the findings of this study which indicated that the female initiation rite had a negative influence on the pursuit of formal education by the young women who were initiated, it would be interesting to see to what extent girls' academic self concept declines, if at all it does, after they have gone through initiation. Such a study would help shed further light on the relationship that exists between traditional practices and formal schooling.
- iii. The findings in this study have also indicated that there was some subtle resistance by the school dropouts to the cultural beliefs which put them at risk of dropping out of school. It would therefore be interesting to find out the dynamics involved in the way young people perceive themselves in relation to the identity of the social groups to which they belong. Such a study would help bring clarity to the nature of relationships that exist between individuals and the groups to which they belong.

- iv. Another important aspect of this study, which also came out of the interpretation and discussion of the literature, was that dropping out of school is not a sudden occurrence, but that it is a gradual process of disengagement by the future dropouts. A number of studies have indicated that due to perpetual unpleasant circumstances in school, affected students slowly psychologically withdraw from school until they finally physically drop out. In view of this, a qualitative study to find out what facilitates students' attachment and engagement in a school environment would add value.
- v. There also seems to be an urgent need to carry out more in-depth qualitative investigations into how the policy which was passed by the Ministry of Education in Zambia to allow girls who get pregnant to continue with school has fared since its inception. Among other things, findings in this study have indicated that some girls who got pregnant in the rural setting were not able to continue with school or return after giving birth because their parents forced them to get married to the men who impregnated them. Due to its qualitative nature, my study only involved a small sample of participants. Thus, it is necessary for the Ministry of Education in Zambia to support broader in-depth researches in this area to ascertain the magnitude of the constraints that may be faced by young women who want to continue with school in spite of pregnancy or those who want to get back into school after giving birth. This is especially critical in view of the United Nations millennium development goal on education, which seeks to make primary education accessible to all, without exception, by 2015 (see United Nations, 2007).
- vi. Closely related to the study suggested in item four above, it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study on the academic performance of adolescent girls who have never been pregnant and those who returned to school after an experience of pregnancy. Such a study would help generate further information on the effectiveness or lack of it, of the policy which allows adolescent mothers to get re-enrolled into school.

- vii. This study among others things, has indicated that one of the factors that led rural adolescents to drop out of school was the lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. Therefore, it would be helpful to conduct a study to find out the differences in performance levels, if at all, between those students whose parents are actively involved in their education and those whose parents are not involved.

As is the case in a number of other countries in Africa, the study of school dropout in Zambia is still in its infancy, therefore, inevitably, there are many more areas that require further research. However, as far as the findings of my study are concerned, the above-suggested areas, while not being exhaustive, could help set things in motion in the right direction. In the next section, I make my closing statement for the whole dissertation.

10.8 Closure

Firstly, as I indicated in the introduction, my interest to venture into this area of study emerged from my experiences as a young person growing up in rural southern Zambia where I witnessed many young people, mostly girls, prematurely leave school. Secondly, my interest in the area was triggered by the experiences I had when I taught at a government junior high school in Lusaka from 1997 to 1998. During this time, I experienced first hand, the many constraints that teachers and students went through due to inadequate resources. Further, my interest in this area of research has its roots in the statistics from the Ministry of Education annual surveys which have consistently indicated that school dropout is most rampant among rural adolescents. Therefore, my interest in this area of study is not a fleeting academic spark, but a flame that got lit up way back in my life.

In order to have a broader and deeper understanding of the school dropout problem, I adopted in this study a holistic approach which enabled me to study the problem in context as opposed to studying it in fragments. Through the findings and interpretations thereof, I have shown that in order to be in a better position to understand the school dropout problem, one need to not only understand the

experiences that students encounter as individuals, but also be cognizant of the other factors. Firstly, it is vital to take into account the experiences of the students in the families and communities where they come from. Secondly, one needs to be cognizant of what goes on in the school environments where the teaching-learning processes take place. Through this study, therefore, I have demonstrated that there were many interconnected factors which influenced rural adolescents to drop out of school. Therefore, I propose that in order for school dropout interventional measures to be effective, they need be holistic rather than atomistic.

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University of Cape Town

APPENDICES

University of Cape Town

Appendix A: Introductory letter

The University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology
Private Bag
Rondebosch 7700
South Africa.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a registered PhD student in the department of psychology at the University of Cape Town. I am conducting a study on factors that influence adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in Zambia. In order to explore these factors, I need to interview young men and young women who have dropped out of school, parents of these young people and teachers.

I therefore hereby request to conduct the above mentioned research here. I would like to assure you that all the information that I gather will be kept confidentially. Respondents' names will not be used in the report. Apart from that, each of the respondents will be given a consent form where they can choose to accept or not accept to participate in the study. The consent form also allows the participants to withdraw from the study at any point should they feel they cannot continue.

Thanking you in advance for your help.

Yours Faithfully

Ecloss Munsaka

Appendix B: Authorization letter from the Ministry of Education

All communications should be addressed to:
the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education
not to any individual by name.

Telephone: 250855/251293/251315
251283/251298/251318
251291/251306/251319

In reply please quote:
No:.....



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 50093
LUSAKA

26th June, 2006

The Provincial Education Officer,
Southern Region,
LIVINGSTONE.

Dear Madam,

**RE: AUTHORITY FOR MR. E. MUNSAKA TO INTERVIEW SOME
TEACHERS AND PUPILS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN YOUR
PROVINCE**

I would like to introduce Mr. Ecloss Munsaka a PhD student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape town. Mr. Munsaka is conducting a study on the factors that lead adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in Zambia.

Please assist him.

F.C. Mfula (Mrs.)
Chief Education Standards Officer
For/Permanent Secretary
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION.

Appendix C: Consent Form

I am a registered PhD student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. I am conducting a study on factors that influence adolescent boys and girls to drop out of school in Zambia. In order to explore these factors, I need to interview young men and women who have dropped out of school, parents of these young people and teachers. The Ministry of Education is in full support of this study. Be assured that the information you give will be kept confidentially. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign your name in the space provided below. Should you feel at any point of the interview that you cannot continue, you are free to withdraw from the study.

Participant

Name: ----- Signature: -----

Date: ----- Place: -----

Witness/Researcher

Name: ----- Signature: -----

Date: ----- Place: -----

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study.

Appendix D: Interview guide for dropouts

Questions about personal and family background of participant

1. How old are you?
2. How old were you when you dropped out of school?
3. In what grade were you when you dropped out of school?
4. Tell me the level of education that your siblings and some of your close relatives have attained.
5. What types of jobs do your siblings and close relatives do?
6. What have you been doing since you left school?

Questions about school experiences

1. How did you find school?
2. What were your experiences just before you dropped out of school?
3. What reasons led you to drop out of school?
4. What support did you receive from your teachers in your schooling?
5. How did your school respond to your non academic challenges?
6. Tell me how your family reacted when you dropped out.
7. Tell me about your career aspirations while you were still at school.
8. What were some of the challenges that you faced in pursuing your career aspirations?

Questions about community life

1. Where were you living when you dropped out of school?
2. What do people do for a living in the community where you lived?
3. How involved were you in these sources of livelihood?
4. What activities were you taught in your culture as boys and girls to be integrated in your community?
5. How did these cultural activities influence your pursuit of formal education?

6. What activities do young men and women in your community like to do in their spare-time?
7. Were there men and women who had completed school in the community where you lived?
8. What were the most common reasons that led to school dropout in the community where you lived?
9. Who were your role models while you were at school?
10. Tell me about the support you received from your parents in your schooling.

University of Cape Town

Appendix E: Interview guide for parents

1. What do you do for a living?
2. What level of education have you attained?
3. What were your expectations of your child when he/she was still in school?
4. How do you teach boys and girls to integrate them into the community?
5. What duties do you give boys and girls in your home?
6. What led your child/children to drop out of school?
7. How did you react when your child/children dropped out of school?
8. What generally leads boys and girls to drop out of school in your community?
9. What happens to boys and girls who drop out of school in your community?
10. How was your interaction with the teachers who taught your child?
11. What support did you give your child in his/her pursuit of education?
12. What did you do when your child dropped out of school?
13. What are the common activities done by young men and women in their spare time in your community?
14. How does your community perceive formal schooling?

Appendix F: Interview guide for teachers

1. What experiences have you had with children who drop out of school?
2. What are the common reasons that lead students to drop out of school?
3. What support does your school give to those students who show signs that they are not coping well with school?
4. Would you indicate how the policy that allows pregnant girls to continue with school and/or re-enrol after they have given birth has fared in your school?
5. How involved are parents in the education of their children at this school?
6. How does your school deal with students' non academic challenges?
7. Could you tell me the challenges you face in covering the syllabi on the school curriculum?
8. How is the student's family background linked to the pursuit of formal schooling?

Appendix G: Guide for focus group discussions with dropouts

1. Let us talk about the reasons that led you to drop out of school.
2. Could we now discuss your experiences with regard to the way your teachers and the school in general responded to problems such as absenteeism, lack of motivation, problem behaviour?
3. What was the classroom interaction like between teachers and students at the school you were?
4. Let us discuss your career aspirations while you were at school.
5. All of you indicated in the individual interviews that I had with you that you had role models while you were still at school. Could we now spend sometime talking about these role models?
6. Could we now discuss how people marry in this community?
7. In the individual interviews that I had with you, most of you indicated that it is common for parents here to pull their daughters out of school and marry them off. Could we discuss this a bit more?
8. I would like us now to talk about how young men and women are inducted from childhood into adulthood in this community.

Appendix H: Guide for focus group discussions with parents

1. Could we talk about your expectations of your children while they were still at school?
2. What reasons led your child/children to dropout of school?
3. I would like to know what typically happens in this community when a child drops out of school.
4. Let us now focus on your views on the value of formal schooling in this community.
5. How closely did you collaborate with teachers who taught your children?
6. Could we discuss the support you gave your children at home in their pursuit of education?
7. Let us discuss how marriages take place in this community.
8. How are young men and women inducted from childhood into adulthood in this community?
9. In the individual interviews that I had with you, most of you indicated that pregnancy is the most common factor that leads girls, especially to drop out of school. Could we talk about what typically happens when a school-going girl gets pregnant or when a school-going boy impregnates a girl in this community?

Appendix I: Guide for focus group discussions with teachers

1. Let us talk about the experiences you have had with students who drop out of school.
2. For sometime now, the Ministry of Education policy that allows girls who get pregnant to continue with school and/or return to school after giving birth, has been in place. As the people directly involved in the teaching of these young people, could we spend sometime discussing how this very important educational policy has fared thus far?
3. In the individual interviews that I had with you, what came out was that early marriages are one of the major reasons a number of girls drop out of school. Could we talk about this in a little more detail?
4. How is the collaboration between you as teachers and the parents of the children you teach?
5. Could we discuss the experiences you have had as teachers in teaching children from a variety of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds?
6. I have learnt that you have a guidance and counselling department here at your school. Could we talk about how it functions?
7. Some of the dropouts that I interviewed in this community indicated to me that they left school because of being forced into early marriages by their parents. As teachers, what experiences have you had with regard to this problem raised by dropouts?
8. Let us now discuss the teacher/student ratio in this school. How has this influenced the way you teach?