



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES AND
LEADERSHIP**

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL DROUPOUT AT PRIMARY
AND SECONDARY LEVEL IN MZILIKAZI DISTRICT OF BULAWAYO.**

BY

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DECLARATION

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I declare that 'An examination of the causes of school dropout at primary and secondary level in Mzilikazi district of Bulawayo', is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further affirm that research ethics that need to be upheld were adhered to.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to examine causes of school dropout among learners in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The research was done with selected urban primary and secondary schools located in the old locations of Njube and Lobengula in Bulawayo. The study was informed by the qualitative and quantitative paradigms, with a qualitative approach taking an upper hand. Data collection was done by means of questionnaires and interviews where both closed and open ended statements of questions were used. Collected data was authenticated by triangulation of methodology and theories, with key informants systematically sampled. Clarification of factors that contribute to school dropout, the main focus being on causes, effects and remedies. The research revealed through review of related literature that participants were aware that school dropout is caused by students themselves, family, community and the school environment. Finally, recommendations were made to urge policy planners to consider the laid down facts.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my spouse who supported me financially, and my lovely sons whose support and care strengthened me during the course of undertaking this research.

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CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

This research is meant to examine the reasons why children are leaving school before completion in the Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo. The study focused on four schools located in the old suburbs of Njube and Old Lobengula. This first section covered the problem identification and its context. A focus on the general overview of school dropout in different setups and nations, thus the background to study. Other issues looked at are, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study which refers to the need, purpose or relevance of the study. Beneficiaries of the study were also highlighted, leading questions, as well as delimitations and limitations which are choices the researcher made and boundaries beyond the researcher's control respectively. Having covered such, the problem was outlined and how the researcher tackled it.

1.2 Background to the study

There is a general agreement among states, communities and families that education is a basic requirement in today's world. Alvares *et al* (2013) postulated that education is a basic tool of development, the need for a competent, dedicated and caring workforce whose interests are focused on development of the country. It is from this contextual understanding that the high school dropout rate especially among Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools had to be closely examined to identify the causes and try to strategize for solutions.

According to Alvares *et al* (2013) school dropout is characterised by social, cultural and economic effects. They continue to state that school dropout at individual and societal level are multiple. This implies that social, cultural and economic factors are the major drivers of school dropout at primary and secondary level.

Most children are leaving school without reaching anticipated levels due to their own liking and also due to factors beyond their control. This study tracked back some of the broad national and international perspectives on reasons for dropping out of school before completion.

One notable international policy is the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education (1994) which encourages all governments to prioritise policy, legal and budgetary provisions to improve their education systems to take into account the wide diversity of learners' unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. This was after it realised that some children dropout of school due to physical challenges whereby schools are not accommodative to learners with special needs. It also recommends main streaming with child-centred pedagogy to combat discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (Layton, 2012)

Alvares *et al* (2013) asserts that early school leaving (ESL) an indicator used by European Union to establish targets for education policies. It is an indicator that holds a reference the schooling level certification and as such comprehensive perspective of educational and training activities, including formal and non-formal learning. The yard stick for measuring school dropout in Portugal was the legally established age for compulsory education (Alvares et al, 2013). It was a measure of school access not of school success. In most nations school dropout has not been a major theme in research or public policy until 1980 (Ferraio 2001), hence it has gradually taken shape.

School dropout was defined simply as not attending school during legal compulsory education age, which at the time included all children and youths aged between six and fifteen.

The Zimbabwe post-colonial educational policies partly influenced by the political ideology and the philosophy of the ruling government as enshrined in its 1980 election manifesto (Zvobgo cited in Ngwenya, 2016) and the 1948 United Nations Charter on Human Rights

(Mthethwa, 2015) placed education within the fundamental rights of every citizen (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2023). The new dispensation in the provision of education was not only meant to redress the post-colonial imbalances but to demonstrate the government's serious commitment to international conventions and agreements regarding the provision of equal access, equity and equality basic education (Thomas, 2015).

According to Zvobgo in Ngwenya (2016) colonial educational policies marginalised and bottlenecked the education of the indigenous people. Most Zimbabwe children were forced to drop out due to factors beyond their own control. Policies such as education for all (EFA) which came with free and compulsory education in Zimbabwe were put in place in a bid to try and draw back those who had dropped out of school due to war and due to colonial imbalances. This free education strained the economic leading to the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in the nineteen-nineties which saw more children dropping out of school due to poverty. Then the introduction of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) tried to minimise the outflow but it did not cater for all. None the less even some BEAM beneficiaries are dropping out due to other reasons besides funding.

From what the researcher has observed in the local community, there are many children of school going age who are roaming the streets. It was therefore the researcher's intent to closely examine the major causes of these dropouts at this cluster's three primary school and one secondary school.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

There is a high rate of school dropout experienced by schools in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. The problem can therefore be summarized in question form: What are the factors that contribute to school dropout at primary and secondary school levels in Mzilikazi District?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the causes of school dropout in primary and secondary schools in Mzilikazi District of Bulawayo, with a view of getting possible ways for solving the problem.

1.5 Research Objectives

- To determine the causes that force the learners to drop out of school before completion.
- To identify effects of dropout to the school and the community at large.
- To recommend measures that can be adopted to curb the problem of school dropout.

1.6 Research Question

What are the major causes of school dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district of Bulawayo?

1.6.1 Sub questions

- Which are the effects of dropping out of school before completion?
- How can the problem of dropping out of school before completion be eradicated?

1.7 Significance of the study

This in simpler terms refers to the need, the relevance, purpose or benefits of the study. This study would benefit the following stakeholders in various ways: children (dropouts), teachers, educational researchers, policy makers, the ministry of primary and secondary education, school psychological services, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) parents and the community at large.

1.7.1 Children (School dropouts)

This research may see some of the children who are out of school due to reasons beyond their control being drawn back to school, after the reasons for leaving have been addressed. Some of them may benefit even through non-formal education.

1.7.2 Teachers

Teachers may use the results from this research to apply their expertise to keep learner at school by making adjustments to cater for learners with different needs and challenges.

1.7.3 Educational Researchers

Educational researchers may use this research to add literature to their studies of the similar phenomena. They may even study further to find out more from where this research will have left.

1.7.4 Policy makers

Policy makers and designers are usually not the implementors, hence they may come up with policies or a curriculum which drives away learners. They will use this research to try and strategise new approaches to cater for all and keep children at school. They may use the results of this research to improve the curriculum and make amendments to suit all set ups.

1.7.5 The ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

The ministry may use the researcher to revise supervision in schools so as to try solve some of the causes of dropout which emanate from the school environment. It is also the duty of the ministry to make sure that the curriculum suits learners from different backgrounds and environments.

1.7.6 School Psychology Services (SPS)

This department may use the results of this research to comprehensively test, analyse, assess and evaluate to assist in diagnosing challenges in learner with special needs. This may also

help them develop individualised plans. They may also use the results to ensure that learners with special needs are catered for regardless their status.

1.7.7 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

These organisations usually assist the less privileged learners through donations. This research may cause them to intervene and provide assistance to learners who dropout due to poverty.

1.7.8 Parents and the Community

Parents and the community at large will be enlightened on how children who drop out of school can be assisted and be drawn back to school. The community will have gained knowledge on how to treat children who leave school before completion, through non-formal education and projects and also to work hand and glove with the school.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The researcher set boundaries in terms of issues which were studied, geographical location of the target population to whom generalisations were made as well as theoretical boundaries. Thomas and Nelson (2001) assert that delimitations are choices which are made by the researcher in defining a workable research problem. This implies that delimiting the study is as good as putting the reader into a view point as to geographical setting concerned. There was need for the researcher to set boundaries or limits in terms of numbers, geographical solutions and target population.

In this case the study was targeting three primary schools and one secondary school situated in the old locations of Old Lobengula and Njube suburbs of Bulawayo. Two of the primary schools are government run while the third is a council school. The secondary school is a government school. All four schools are within Masiye Cluster in Mzilikazi District of

Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. They are situated in high density urban set ups characterised by various activities.

The main targets were dropouts, parents, teachers and school heads whereby the study was capturing responses in relation to causes of school dropout. The study had some theoretical boundaries also which are cultural, social, academic and economic. Johns (2003) postulated that a study may focus based on rules which are considered typical by the culture and society. The researcher focused the study on economic, cultural, societal and academic problems. The researcher examined factors which are economic since the community is characterised by high unemployment and most bread winners are the elderly looking after orphans or children whose parents abandoned. Another factor is the culture of these communities where by completing school is not emphasized. After reaching a certain level children indulge in the activities of the community, sometimes girls are impregnated and given out to early marriages. Some children in these old suburbs leave school due to the curriculum itself. The school tone does not accommodate them as they are and this forces them out. This research focused primarily on such factors.

1.9 Limitations of the study

This study will seek to examine the causes of school dropout, whereby children leave school before completion. However the study may face limitations beyond the researcher's capabilities, though great effort will be put to reduce such effects on the expected results. The research will focus on Masiye cluster where the researcher is working and observes daily activities of that community.

Other factors which may limit the research are resources, time and financial constraints in studying the four schools in the cluster. Human related challenges may also occur as well as

difficulties in convincing the respondents to complete the questionnaires. All these challenges are likely to be faced due to the fact that the research study is focussed on people.

The research could also face challenges of getting falsified information on the causes of school dropout due to the fact that some perpetrators of this drop out were informants in the study. Parents, teachers and school heads could have caused this dropout and thereby could give false information on the causes. To avoid this the researcher had to go through ethical considerations with the respondents to assure them of total confidentiality, safety and protection from accusations and victimisation. The researcher also had to explain why she is carrying out the study to shed more light.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

1.10.1 School Dropout

According to Ngwenya (2017) school dropout refers to leaving school prematurely or before completion. Webster (2020) echoed the same sentiments when he says a dropout is a student who withdraws before completing a course of instruction. School dropout means leaving school early before completing a course or level.

1.10.2 Causes of school dropout

School dropout has been defined as early leaving of school. Causes of this early leaving are the factors that push students to leave school early. According to Sagenmuller (2017) cause of school dropout can be viewed as which lead to significant decrease in student retention. These are also to as common triggers that may lead to students dropping studies. In a nutshell causes of school dropout are entities that produce an effect or are responsible for withdrawal of students

1.11 Summary

This chapter focused mainly on the background which was to examine major causes of school dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Research objectives and questions were formulated which sought to examine the extent at which school dropout was affecting the school and the community at large.

The significance of the study also unveiled how the research would have a positive impact on different stakeholders that include teachers, learners, policy makers, researchers, the ministry, schools psychological services, non-governmental organisations, parents and the community at large. Also indicated were limitations and delimitations of the study. This led to the next chapter which focuses on review of related literature.

1.12 Organization of the rest of the study.

The rest of the study is organized as follows:

1.12.1 Chapter Two

The next chapter is chapter 2 which sought to review related literature. Its major contents being the conceptual and theoretical framework, causes of school dropout and also highlighting on the previous research studies.

1.12.2 Chapter Three

The third chapter focused on the methodology, data collection procedures, research tools or instruments, population and sampling, ethics as well as data presentation, management and analysis.

1.12.3 Chapter Four

The fourth area dwelt much on data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings. This is the actual collection of data using the instruments prescribed in chapter three.

1.12.4 Chapter Five

This chapter summarises, concludes and makes recommendations based on the findings from the previous chapter

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented a review of literature pertinent to the theoretical basis of this study of causes of school dropout. It also provided a conceptual and theoretical framework basically concentrating on the major causes of early leaving of school. These will equip facilitators and other stakeholders on how to curb high school dropout. It also identified gaps after pointing out what was already done to try and eradicate the problem.

2.2 Conceptual Framework: School Dropout

According to Caltaldi et al (2009) school dropout can be referred to as early school leaving, early withdrawal or attrition, or student elimination. This is viewed from various angles and based on the push factors. This is supported by Lee (2003) who asserts that dropping out means leaving high school, college, university or another group for practical reasons, necessities or disillusionment with the system from which the individual in question leaves. When a cohort begins an educational journey at whatever entry point an education planner is interested in knowing how many of these have been promoted to the next grade, how many repeated and how many left school all together to probably join later or never to come back again (UNESCO, 2009). These will be used to evaluate the internal efficiency of our education system in this study. In simpler terms school dropout refers to children who leave school and these are measured by calculating the remainder of those who repeat and those who proceed to the next level. If for an example, the previous year one had a class of forty-five students, thirty-five proceed, five repeat making if forty, the five unaccounted for are then dropouts. This implies that school dropouts are students who were once at school but are no longer there and nobody knows where they are, they are not accounted for.

School dropout can also be referred to as failure by the learner to complete an education cycle within a given timeframe for various reasons.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Because this study entails the causes of school dropout in Mzilikazi district in Bulawayo, the theory of causes of school dropout, effects as well as recommended solutions were derived from that place and were used to bring forth what the relevant literature revealed regarding the causes, effects and the way forward. This is important because Alvares et al (2013) claim that the causes of school dropout are economic, social and academic. It is imperative that countries worldwide are facing the same problem. According to Zuckerberg et al (2019) a number of children are dropping out of school yearly and it had become a nagging problem that haunts parents across the world. Arshi (2019) asserts that some children leave school due to socio-economic needs whereby children who come from low income groups dropout of school to go and work in order to supplement on the family needs. The other causes highlighted within a family are divorce and separation as well as death whereby children are left in child headed families. Arshi (2019) continues to state that poor health of parents and children themselves can also be a contributing factor. Some children stay at home to look after their chronically ill parents or them themselves being not well can affect their ability to complete school.

School dropout can emanate from the family, how the community conceives and values education, the school curriculum itself among other factors. In this regard there was need to find out more about the problem so as to try and deal with it accordingly.

A theoretical framework is of paramount importance to any study due to its role of promoting an understanding of the factors which may affect, influence or are related to the identified problem. Due to such two theories adopted in this study are social stratification and socialisation theories.

According to Rumberger (2004) there is a framework called an institutional perspective which focuses on school characteristics, policies and practices. Rumberger continues to state that structural features of the school such as its size, resources available and access to qualified personnel can influence dropout rates. This institutional perspective argues that too much emphasis is placed on 'high-risk' youth and their families and ignoring the high-risk environments where they live.

Rumberger's research suggests that the decision to remain at school or to leave school is affected by various contexts and policy factors that interact over the lifetime of a learner. The two factors highlighted are the individual perspective and the institutional perspective, their reciprocal relationships and their possibility to change overtime. Rumberger (2004) went on to state that the individual perspective focuses on learner attributes, background, characteristics, school engagement and also academic performance. He suggests that there is a strong relationship between the student background characteristics and dropping out of school. This student background encompasses race or ethnicity, gender, poverty, special education placement as well as language.

Rumberger (2004) posits that equally important is what learners experience once in school, students who are engaged in learning and in social dimensions of school are less likely to drop out of school. Most children leave school due to poor relationship with teachers and peers, as well as due to curriculum itself which can be either be too challenging or not challenging at all. Poor academic achievement in both primary and secondary education has been observed as a predictor of early school leaving. This is also associated with high absenteeism, indiscipline and student mobility (Allensworth and Easton, 2005).

Allensworth and Easton (2005) also relate the individual perspective to earlier preparation to earlier preparation, whereby the learner's success in the first year of high school is highly correlated to his or her potential graduation. It has been realised that learners who do not

successfully maintain an adequate course load, either due to attendance or academic achievements are less likely to graduate (NCES, 2007). Research also suggests that although success in the first year of high school is important for staying on track, failing in the early grades predicts failing in high school. According to Zau and Betts (2008), a highly individual approach is needed to identify and remedy dropping out of school.

According to Davis and Moore (2012), social stratification can be examined from different perspectives, which are functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist theory states that systems in a society exist for good reasons as they serve a needed purpose. (Davis and Moore, 2012). These functionalists examine how society's parts operate and also argue that the greater the functional importance of social role, the greater must be the reward. This implies that the society should consider the functions of a school as one of the societal systems and plough more resources so that the community gets that education and early leaving of school is avoided. It has been viewed that certain tasks in society are more valuable than others. However the Davis-Moore thesis does not explain inequalities in the education system or inequalities due to race or gender. According to functionalists social stratification prevents qualified people from attempting to fill roles, for example, an under-privileged youth has less chance of pursuing his or her career due to lack of opportunities availed to him or her. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality such as between the rich business owners and poor workers. (Anderson and Massey, 2001). In a school system it is inequality between the academically gifted and those with challenges, leading to drop out. According to Davis and Moore (2012), the conflict theory opposes social stratification asserting that it benefits a few individuals in the society, for example, paying a soccer player millions for an annual contract, at the expense of a teacher who is fully employed to educate the community. Conflict theories try to bring awareness to inequalities, like, how a rich society can have so many poor members, hence some children from this rich society are dropping out

of school due to poverty. (Forbes, 2014). Most conflict theorists draw on Karl Marx who believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production (Marx 1848, retrieved in 2012). Marx saw deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels.

Symbolic interactionists according to Davis and Moore (2012) examine stratification from a micro-level whereby everyday interactions of individuals are used to explain society as a whole. This strives to explain how people's socialization affects their everyday interactions. In a society people interact with those who share the same social standing with them. Davis and Moore continue to state that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing, hence this can affect a child to the extent of leaving school.

Some learners drop out of school due to social stratification which ranks people according to social inequalities. Davis and Moore assert that social structure itself is determined by the social institutions and shapes them.

2.4 Causes of school dropout

Zahara (2009) asserts that school dropout is multifaceted and so are its causes. He continues to state that these causes may be grouped in relation to their different levels, students and their families, community and school. According to Gonzalez et al (2018) school dropout is engineered by socio-economic status, poor school performance, drug and substance abuse, peer pressure as well as poverty among other things. These are major push factors of school dropout. Students drop out of school on their own at the same time they are forced to leave school due to factors beyond their own control, especially young students who are so dependent on parents.

2.4.1 Family Causes

At family level students drop out of school due to poverty, broken marriages, HIV/AIDS and how that family values education. According to Zvobgo in Ngwenya (2016) large, dysfunctional and poverty stricken families were found to have problems of providing adequate

basic needs for all their children. Zvobgo continues to state that this development was manifested as soon as the provision of education was commercialized and government subsidies were either reduced or removed. (Education Act, 1991). Most families capitalized on free education and also some benefited from donor funding. When such is removed, children dropping out of school. Nowadays we have donors who fund education for the poor such as Capernaum and other stakeholders, if such donors withdraw their services children will drop out of school. BEAM beneficiaries drop out of school if they are not selected in the following year, because the family cannot afford the fees and levies. Some families cannot even afford other school requirements like buying uniforms and stationery.

Some students especially at primary and secondary level may drop out of school due to divorce or broken marriages. Such children are left with no choice but to leave school because some stepparents will not be in a position to support step children. Those in secondary and tertiary may resort to prostitution and drug abuse. Zahara (2009) posits that prostitution, street gang membership or beggars network almost leads children to dropping out of school. According to Karuva (2017) some of these dropouts become a blessing in disguise to the parents, looking at Zimbabwe as an agro-based economy, they provide much needed child labour in the fields or pastures while the younger ones look after their siblings. Most of these broken marriages are characterized by a high level of abuse and hatred. Some mothers leave with their children for their rural homes where schools are too far for a town-bred child.

Children of low income earners whose parents struggle to put food on the table would no doubt be candidates for truancy (Ngodu, 2010). Netsianda (2017) asserts that truancy of a different magnitude is equally alive in schools as reported by media daily. Mupunde (2017) states that some of these students skip the boarder to neighbouring South Africa in search of employment and some engage in gold panning. According to Ngodu (2010) if the elder sibling leaves school early, the younger ones will also follow suit. If there is a "bad apple" in the family it is likely

to spoil the rest. This implies that school dropout may emanate from family background and how that family values education.

2.4.2 Community Causes

According to Masara and Tshili (2017) people residing in places where gold panning is rife complain that their communities have been polluted. Prostitution is the order of the day, marriages are being wrecked and young girls are engaging in prostitution resulting in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Children in such communities do not see the need for education as they see the uneducated becoming rich. According to Ngodu (2010) some children leave school to look after their siblings after parents are down with HIV/AIDS. There are a lot of child-headed families whereby the eldest child becomes the bread winner, yet unemployed and needs to continue with school.

The early marriage custom has also contributed to high school dropout rate in both rural and urban centres. Karuva (2017) reveal a case of an ailing mother who married off her sixteen year old daughter to a forty year old man. Even though the man was later arrested the girl's life was ruined. Early marriage leads to early pregnancy which is rife in most secondary schools causing girls to drop out of school. In some cultures it is normal practice to marry children at a tender age. In such communities even community leaders view it as lawful because they themselves are at some point engaged in such marriages. You find a chief marrying a sixteen year old girl because custom allows it. Some church cults also practice such, whereby church leaders dream of marrying young girls and they do so with the blessing of the church regulation.

According to Zvobgo (2004) the distance between the home and the school is a factor which may cause school dropout. Some schools are too far especially rural schools, and the new satellite schools which used to be farm houses. Netsianda (2017) talks of children walking distances of fifteen to twenty kilometres per day. With the introduction of Early Childhood

Education which caters for four year olds it becomes practically impossible. Zvobgo (2004) asserts that the government advocated for the building of schools at every 5km to curb the problem of distance.

Some communities are characterized by high drug and substance abuse. These substance abusers cause fear among people and local teachers who feel insecure in such areas. Machivenyika (2017) asserts that teachers who work in areas where there is high risk and crime are afraid to interact with parents and guardians of perpetrators. He continues to state that this lack of interaction between parents and teachers may lead to school dropout.

Some communities also have a custom of discontinuing education after a certain level. Tshili (2016) asserts that when children see their classmates or siblings leaving school at grade 7 or at 'O' level to pursue certain things like being street kids, prostitution or menial jobs may also join the queue. Some children are influenced by such an environment when they envy non-school going peers. Failing to choose good friends from their communities usually misleads students to end up engaging in unruly behaviours which may cause them to find themselves roaming the streets cluelessly.

2.4.3 School Causes

The school environment or policy may cause children to leave before completion. Thomas (2015) posits that this usually emerges from too much emphasis on passing every level, grade or form for one to proceed. These youngsters usually get embarrassed and feel defeated and leave school. It is also frustrating to repeat a certain level without success for conservative years. Children need to be counseled and guided by the school to feel accommodated and accepted. If for example a student fails grade 7, it becomes very difficult for him or her to secure a form one place because all secondary schools will be rejecting him or her. It also

happens after 'O' level whereby entry qualification into 'A' level hinders progress to some learners. The education system has to be accommodative for the less gifted academically.

According to Arshi et al (2019) some children drop out of school due to disabilities and academic failure. Most of our schools do not have facilities for learners with various challenges ranging from physical to mental challenges. They do not provide inclusive education and parents may not afford to take their children to those limited schools which are usually too expensive.

Once a child has been tested and proven to be having a challenge or disabilities which needs special education, the ordinary school spits that child causing him in most cases to remain at home forever. This is ascertained by Arshi et al (2019) when they say that illness that occurs during childhood and continues life-long may cause a child to stay out of school. They continue to say that the health of a child greatly affects his schooling.

Some children leave school because their first impression in that school was not good. For example when children get to form one they are met by a high standard of bullying, at grade one or ECD they face teachers who have a negative attitude who are not well groomed into acting in loco-parentis. According to Gates, Zuckerberg, Assarge and Dell (2019) if the school has no proper ways of welcoming new students it may cause chaos. New students need to be assured of their safety in the new school. Nowadays new students may meet cyber bullying which has sprouted due to use of social media. This one is a silent killer because it causes children to leave due to fear and insecurity.

A few years back the education system of Zimbabwe was characterised by a curriculum which puts more emphasis on academic excellence. Machivenyika (2017) asserts that learners were demotivated by pedagogies which are not learner-centered and also do not address individual needs of learners. If only teacher could adopt the skills based curriculum which advocates for

the development of individual talents among learners. There are some learners who are good in certain practical work or co-curricular activities. These need to be developed so that every child has a reason of being at school. Yahia, Essid and Rebai (2018) talk of educational performance, infrastructure and resources as influencing school dropout.

2.5 Effects of School Dropout

Most children who drop out of school before completion are found roaming the streets as street kids, girls are impregnated, boys engage in drug and alcohol abuse. Some are victims of child labour and early marriages. It also becomes very difficult for one to get employment due to lack of skill, leading to high crime in the country.

According to Barton (2005) most children who drop out of school face social stigma together with their families. They depend on begging, they rely on public welfare and government assistance. Adair (2001) asserts that these dropouts cost the government in lost wages, revenue and productivity throughout their lives. This is due to the fact that they do not contribute anything but they are the beneficiaries of state funds.

It is also noted that once a child drops out of school chances of him or her getting a job are very slim. These students lack self esteem due to the fact that they are unskilled and have no knowledge to fulfill their dreams like their peers who are skilled. They are periodically unemployment throughout their lives (Andrew et al 2002). Even if they get a job they get very low salaries because their employment opportunities are very slim.

Adair (2001) posits that more youths in prison or detention facilities have no more than 9th grade in education. The cycle in and out of prison because poverty makes them resort to crime. In a nutshell dropping out of school before completion has a negative effect or problems to the families and the community at large.

2.6 Previous Research Studies

This research has been carried out several times but the problem is still prevailing and it is very high in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district in Bulawayo. The same problems of socio-economic status, academic failure and cultural beliefs have been identified. Solutions are usually difficult to meet due to the diversity in culture and no proper legislature on these issues.

Ngwenya (2017) had some case studies one of them of a girl child who was married out prematurely because her mother was chronically ill and could not fend for the family. The child was married to a rich old man so that the family could put food on the table. In such cases the perpetrators are put behind bars but the life of the child has no remedy and nothing is done to try and bring the child back on track.

According to Mansory (2007) the girl child was the most affected in most cultures due to the gender roles that she has. In a child headed family it is the girl child who has to take care of the family. This was supported by Holcamp (2009) who posits that some cultures are depriving the girl child due to the fact that she would be married after all.

Arshi et al (2019) carried out a research and found out that there are seven common reasons why children drop out of school, and they also tried to identify ways of prevention. The seven reasons stated were attendance, disengagement, pregnancy, financial difficulties, mental illness, drug abuse and disability. They continued to state that these can only be prevented if parents and other stakeholders get involved and also by motivating and encouraging children towards realistic expectations. The researcher has also carried out the study in her area to try and close the gaps left by previous studies and also deal with today's cultural practices.

2.7 Summary

A literature survey which describes the causes, effects and previous study on school dropout has been unravelled. Some knowledge on school dropout has been demonstrated and also

scholars have been cited in major causes of school dropout mainly being the home background, which includes financial constraints and natural causes like death and poor health. School causes have also been highlighted which range from negative attitudes by learners and facilitators to the defects of the curriculum itself. The community has also been noted as the highest cause due to peer pressure, attitude towards education and cultural belief. In this regard the literature studied gave a clear view of what causes school dropout to be so high in Njube and Lobengula suburbs. The next chapter describes the methodology the researcher employed to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The use of an appropriate research method is key to collecting enough and relevant data. In this context there was need to collect information on why learners leave school before completion. The qualitative methodology was used to help the researcher develop new ideas for improvement to the phenomena. It also helped the researcher grow in understanding feelings, values and behaviours and thereby generate more knowledge.

3.2 Research Methodology

According to Chiromo (2009) a research methodology is informed or dependent on three things, that is, ontology (which focuses on reality), epistemology (which refers to ways of knowing) and axiology (which focuses on ethics and value systems). In this context the researcher used the qualitative research methodology taking into cognisance the three above. Qualitative research relies primarily on the collection and analysis of qualitative data to search for patterns or themes. According to Creswell (2014) knowledge is subjective and no group values are wrong, hence values and principles are an integral part of social life. The research dwelt much on forms of social inquiry that rely on non-numeric data in the form of words. Humans were used as the primary data gathering instruments. The researcher used this method so that the subjects in the study play a role in interpreting the research outcome. And also the research design emerged as the research progressed, hence the case study research design was adopted.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of qualification, for example, people's lives, stories, behaviour, social movements and interactional relationships. This is supported by Burns and

Groove (2007) who assert that this methodology is used to describe life experiences and give them meaning. The research involves holistic inquiry and is carried out in a natural setting and grounded theory is developed. Chiromo (2009) postulates that there is assessment of validity through cross-checking sources of information, that is, triangulation. It is also recommended for logical analysis in controlling and accounting for extraneous variables and for narrative summary of results. Chiromo (2009) continues to state that it is also willing to temper with naturally occurring phenomena. Having noted such, the researcher chose the research methodology which led to the research design.

3.3 Research Design

According to Bromley (1990) a case study is usually used in qualitative research and describes it as a systematic enquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. This type of research design helped assess and describe causes of school dropout in Mzilikazi district, particularly around Njube and Lobengula suburbs. It also helped to discern certain known cases and also the participants who are mostly teachers, parents, school heads and learners are easily accessible on a daily basis. This type of research design has a comprehensive method of data collection. Bless et al (1988) view a research design as a program which gives guidance on how to collect, analyse and interpret observed facts. The research design was used to help in getting firsthand information and also discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and record its salient features.

It is an approach to research that focuses on gain of an in-depth understanding of a specific time which implies selecting one and concentrating on that alone (Chiromo, 2009). It is particularly useful when there is a need to obtain an in-depth appreciation of a phenomenon of interest in its natural context, hence the researcher decided to carry out the study with a certain group of schools, school heads and teachers. The case study helped the researcher to discern cases that show similar results due to the environment where the schools are situated. These

schools share the same problem, hence a sample of four schools was studied. The case study helped the researcher to assess attitudes, opinions, demographic information, condition and procedures (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 2002). It also helped the researcher to get real facts existing on the ground from the schools under study. This was possible due to the fact that the design gives in-depth responses about what people think and how they feel about the problem.

3.4 Population and Sample

3.4.1 Target population

Chiromo (2009) describes a population as individuals who will be considered in a research project. It refers to those individuals who conform to specific criteria to which the research intends to generalise the results of the research. Creswell (2014) stipulates that the target population consist of the total collection of people with the characteristics under consideration. In this case the target population and sample were children, parents, teachers and school heads in the area under study, that is, Njube and Lobengula in Mzilikazi district.

3.4.2 Sample

Snowball sampling was used so as to ensure trust between the researcher and participants. Barnet (2002) asserts that snowball sampling focuses exclusively on the rare members of the population and uses successive stages of referral to progress one case to another. A small number of individuals who have the characteristic required who were then used as informants to bring about others who qualify to be included and so on.

3.4.3 Sampling Procedures

Random sampling was used to select participants who were used as respondents. Four school heads whose schools were chosen due to proximity were used. The school heads were asked to randomly choose a teacher to represent other teachers in the school. The researcher also used mixed numbers to choose teachers and parents as well as learners who were used as

respondents. Creswell (2009) asserts that randomisation reduces bias and minimises the threat of internal validity. Every individual has an equal opportunity of being selected.

3.5 Research Instruments

Chiromo (2009) describes research instruments as tools used in data gathering, thus obtaining data or information to be used in answering research questions. Empirical research advocates for one or more such methods of data collection. The researcher here used questionnaires, interviews and observations interchangeably to gather data.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

This is a self report data collection instrument that is filled out by research respondents. A questionnaire according to Burns and Groove (2007) is a document with a list of crafted questions to get data from participants. It has an advantage of being free from bias and also is easy to administer and not time consuming. This questionnaire was used to collect data from the school heads, teachers and parents in the target population. It consisted of both closed and open-ended questions.

According to Thomas and Nelson (2001), the questionnaire gives participants adequate time to give well thought answers and large samples can be made use of, making the results dependable and reliable. Respondents are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order as the others in the same sample. Burns and Groove (2007) posit that questionnaires preserve the participants' anonymity. A quasi-structured questionnaire was used whereby structured and unstructured questions were brought together (Babbie, 2005). Questions were crafted in such a way that some demanded the participants to elaborate on their responses.

3.5.2 Interviews

Maree (2007) views an interview as a face-to-face conversation between the researcher and participants for the purpose of gathering information. It is a dialogue whereby one asks and

another answers in detail. Jackson (2009) posits that interviews provide a chance of giving detailed information to the participants. This has an advantage that even those who cannot write can respond verbally and communicate freely. It is also wise to record some interviews for future use. Interviews also gave the researcher a chance to probe for more information.

The researcher explained to the respondents the purpose of the interview and also clarified where the respondents did not understand and hence obtained valid information. The researcher also did her best by putting the respondents at ease and avoiding questions that elicit monotonous and untruthful answers such as demanding 'Yes or No'. Another advantage of interviews is that they allow probing and posing of follow up questions by the interviewer.

3.5.3 Observation

These are viewed by Stinger (2008) as direct techniques of noticing an activity and events in order to source information. These also helped to provide qualitative data. According to Handy (2009) observations can verify and clarify information gathered using questionnaires and interviews. This helped the researcher to get raw information from participants. Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2011) assert that results may not be reliable if the observer gets carried away by unnecessary aspects and fail to make a proper observation. This implies that observations need a steadfast mind and a clear conscience. The researcher observed the participants on a daily basis and recorded the findings.

These qualitative observations provided detailed descriptions of the events, people and actions in natural settings. The researcher took the stance of an observer as a participant whereby according to Creswell (2014), the researcher would be known and recognized by the participants who may also be aware of his or her goals. The observer interacts with the participants to a limited extent where he or she plays a neutral role as much as possible.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sought permission from the Provincial Education Offices in Bulawayo Metropolitan to conduct her study in their schools. This was in the form of a letter from Midlands State University. The researcher took the authorisation letter to Mzilikazi district office before proceeding to the schools under study.

The researcher personally distributed questionnaires and conducted interviews as well as observations. All this was done with the blessing of the superiors and participants and with prior arrangements. There was need for informed consensus from the participants before the researcher personally collected data from them and this was achieved.

3.7 Data Management

Newman et al 2016 made an assertion that data management is the process of collecting, preserving and disseminating the intellectual output. This includes printed as well as digital versions of the same. They continue to talk about a data management plan which they describe as a formal document that provides a framework for how to handle the data material during and after the research project. It changes together with the needs of the project and its participants and is updated throughout the project to ensure it tracks changes over time there by reflecting the current state of the project. Measures need to be taken to maintain the integrity of the data so that it is not less due to technical mishaps and it is accessed by the right people at the appropriate time. In this research data was collected using observations, questionnaires and interviews and stored as a hard and soft copies. The researcher used USB sticks, external hard drives, spreadsheets, folders, files and bound documents to store data for future use.

3.8 Data Presentation and Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed by transcribing it and using a coding system as well as themes and sub-themes. Creswell (2007) views analysis as ordering, categorising, manipulating and

summarising data in order to obtain answers to research questions. The researcher will structure and organise data collected from various sources to facilitate analysis and make deductions. Such information will have been obtained from questionnaires, interviews and observations. The analysis will be qualitative in nature whereby descriptive tools such as frequencies will be used.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Marshall (1998) posited that research ethics imply the application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct in the collection, analysis, reporting and publication of research. It refers to the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. These ethics provide guidelines for the responsible conduct for the educational research.

The research also ensured that participants are protected from physical and psychological harm during and after the study has been carried out. There was leeway for the students who wanted to withdraw from the study if ever they would feel they no longer want to continue.

Deception was also avoided at all costs in this research, which Creswell (2009) views as providing misleading information or withholding information from participants about the study. If deception had been used, then debriefing was supposed to follow with two aims of dehoaxing and desensitising. According to McLeod (2015) dehoaxing is whereby participants are told the true nature of the research, both for ethical reasons and also to eliminate any desirable effects of deception.

Rathbaumet all (200) view desensitization as a treatment or process that diminishes emotional responsiveness to a negative, aversive or positive stimulus after repeated exposure to it. It is a type of behavioral therapy based on the principle of classical conditioning (Dictionary of Psychology)

The researcher ensured that the participants are willing and free to partake without coercion. There was informed consent from all of them so as to access relevant information. Informed consent follows the idea of the respect of the rights of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Confidentiality is also paramount as it offers respect and protection to assure participants that the information shared will be held in total confidence and anonymity. Creswell (2009) asserts that confidentiality is about maintaining participants' privacy by not revealing the identity of individuals and institutions involved. In this case the participants' responses will be treated with total privacy, not mentioning names or titles.

3.10 Summary

This sought to summarize and conclude on the approach used in the study and the Justification for choosing that approach. The enquiry modes for data collection, observations, interviews as well as questionnaires were used. The targeted population and sampling strategies were laid down. Data collection methods, procedures as well as data management were clearly laid down. And finally ethical considerations were stated to conclude the chapter. The next chapter which is chapter 4 deliberates on data presentation, analysis and findings.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

The study addressed the problem of learners who leave school before completion by examining the causes of this dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District of Bulawayo. The main focus was on data presentation, analysis and discussion on findings. Findings were presented based on data generated from teachers and school heads of the four schools under study. Data obtained through questionnaires were presented in tables, graphs and pie-charts where by the analysis was given above or below each chart. The results of interviews were transcribed and presented thematically in paragraphs and used to supplement the mostly qualitative discussion covering the open ended questions. The qualitative nature of the study enabled the researcher to have a detailed discussion based on the following themes:

- Participants' qualifications and experience
- Causes of school dropout
- Analysis on the effects of dropout
- Ways of eradicating early school leaving

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2.1 Demographic information of the participants

The demographics were based on facilitators' professional qualifications and teaching experience. Table 4.1 below shows the facilitators' professional qualifications.

Table 4.3: Qualifications of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma in Education	8	66.7
Undergraduate Degree	3	25.0
Masters' Degree	1	8.3
PhD	0	0
Total	12	100.0

The table above shows the majority of the facilitators, 66.7%, are Diploma holders, while 25% are degreed and 8.3% hold a Masters' degree and none hold a qualification beyond that. This information was used in the study to determine the facilitators' ability and capability to handle learners and help them complete their schooling. Paul (2012) posits that students' performance is affected by the teacher's age, experience and level of professional training. The outcome reflected that all the facilitators were qualified to teach at either primary or secondary school level.

More information was solicited on the facilitators' work experience as it also has a bearing on how to handle learners with social problems and have been exposed to such learners over the years. Figure 1 below shows the facilitators' work experience.

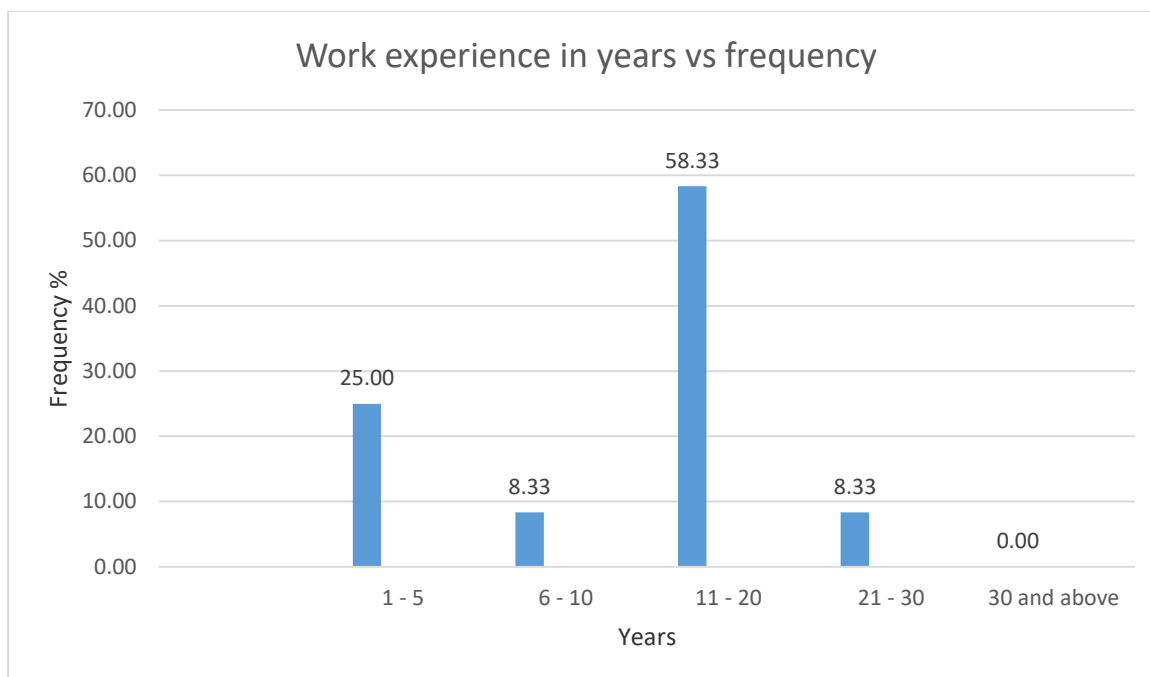


Figure 1: Facilitators' work experience

A large number of facilitators fell in the range 11-20 years of teaching experience, with 58.3%, followed by the 1-5 years range at 25% and then 6-10 years and 21-30 years at par with 8.3% each and none of the facilitators had over 30 years in experience. This statistic reflects that the majority of participants are sufficiently experienced to keep learners at school. There is a saying which goes, 'experience is the greatest teacher'. This implies the participants of this research have gained enough experience in the field and thus can play the significant roles as they act in loco-parentis. Their experience can be the key factor that affects the learners positively or negatively. Zaharia (2009) notes that senior teachers with standard qualifications have rich information and data from them is rich and reliable.

4.2.2 Facilitators' understanding of dropout causes

The participants who are facilitators were asked through questionnaires to indicate if they had any knowledge on the causes of school dropout. The causes were ranked as shown by the table below.

Table 4.4: Causes of school dropout

Category	Frequency								Ranking
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Poverty	6	1	2	2	0	0	0	1	1
School environment	2	0	0	3	2	0	5	0	3
Culture	0	0	1	1	4	3	2	1	7
Religion	0	0	3	0	1	5	2	1	6
Socio-economic status	3	4	1	2	0	1	0	1	2
Peer pressure	1	5	2	2	2	0	0	0	4
Local environment	0	2	3	1	2	3	0	1	5
Distance	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	7	8

Table 4.2 above shows how the facilitators ranked the causes of school dropout, with poverty ranked as the highest contributor to school dropout and distance the lowest. The results were as follows:

1. Poverty
2. Socio-economic status
3. School environment
4. Peer pressure
5. Local environment
6. Religion
7. Culture
8. Distance.

This implies that facilitators associate school dropout with poverty. This is due to the fact that they have learners in the classroom on a daily basis and know their problems through child study.

In order to determine the facilitators' level of understanding on school dropout causes, they were asked to give their own opinion on the causes. The responses obtained revealed that most facilitators had similar experiences on the causes of dropout as reflected in some statements captured by the questionnaire. A facilitator from school A was quoted,

Lack of school fees, stationery, poverty and peer pressure.

Another facilitator from school B said,

Most learners leave school for greener pastures.

A third facilitator from school C said,

Some learners leave school due to hunger as they cannot come to school on an empty stomach.

Additionally, a facilitator from school D said,

Poor performance at school. The more the learner is scolded for not doing well, the more he or she will hate school and decide to dropout.

The above questionnaires were complemented by the results from interviews with school heads who also showed some awareness on the causes of school dropout. One school head from school A said,

Some teachers have a negative attitude towards learners who do not do well in class causing them to leave school early.

Another head from school B stated that,

Our community does not value education, they do not encourage children.

Additionally, a head from school C noted,

People who are in the diaspora leave their children in the custody of house-

maids who cannot encourage children to go to school.

A head from school D, a secondary school, said,

Some cultures believe that if a girl reaches a certain age she should be married out.

Results from facilitators' questionnaires and school heads' interviews indicate that the majority of respondents had some knowledge of what causes school dropout. A close analysis of the results reveals that respondents believe that school dropout has to do with the school environment, home and community background, poverty, peer pressure and socio-economic status. It was never associated with distance due to the fact that the area under study is an urban set up where schools are very convenient to places of residence. However, school heads showed a better understanding of school dropout as they described it and its causes precisely.

To further explore the respondents' understanding of dropout, the school heads were asked to define the term 'school dropout'. These are their responses:

Head A: *It is when a learner absconds from school.*

Head B: *School dropout means leaving school early before completion.*

Head C: *It is whereby a child decides to stay home before completing his or her course.*

Head D: *School dropout means not completing school due to certain conditions like peer pressure and lack of school fees.*

An assessment of the above sentiments reflects facilitators were generally aware of the school dropout problem as they indicated that there are learners who dropped out from their schools and classes as shown by the table below:

Table 4.5: Responses on whether learners dropout from school

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	75
No	3	25
Total	12	100

The above table asserts that learners have been leaving school in the past two years as per the facilitators' responses, whereby 'Yes' response scored 75% while 'No' is 25% which is but a quarter.

This was consolidated by school heads' responses from the interviews carried out on whether there are learners who drop out of school and also asked to rate their schools:

A school head from school A, said:

In 2018 my school was at 2% in terms of dropout and 8% in 2019.

School B – 1% in 2018 and 3% in 2019

School C – 10% in 2018 and 1% in 2019

School D – 15% in 2018 and 9% in 2019

School D being a secondary school had the highest rate of school dropout in the past two years due to the fact that these grownups are exposed more factors like peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, early marriages and other factors.

4.2.3 Analysis on the effects of dropout

A common challenge cited by most respondents was that school dropout has a negative effect to the community at large as shown by the responses below:

A familiar from school A was quoted,

School dropout leads to poverty.

Another facilitator from school B said,

It leads to thieving, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse.

The third respondent from school C said,

Community will have a greater number of uneducated youths.

Additionally, a facilitator from school D cited,

An increase in crime, street kids and teenage pregnancies.

School heads also cited the same problems. One head from school A said,

Reduction in the enrolment lowers the standard of the school.

School B head said,

Such a society will never cooperate because they do not value education.

School C head stated,

There are a lot of thugs who break into school and steal after hours.

A head from school D stated that,

A lot of our learners who left school are now mothers, drunkards and some have died of HIV/AIDS.

It is clear from the participants' connotations that leaving school early or before completion has a negative impact on the community, the school and to a large extent the learners themselves as they have a miserable future due to such. It was cited that the community suffers strange behaviours such as crime and prostitution, the school enrolment drops to the extent that affects its being an ideal school and the learners' lives are totally destroyed. Alvares et al (2013) assert that these effects affect communities, schools and states socially, culturally and economically. Poverty affects the state in that more funds would be ploughed into welfare of citizens.

4.2.4 Ways of eradicating early school leaving

Facilitators and school heads of schools understudy are in agreement that something must be done by schools, parents, communities and the learners themselves to curb this dropout problem. Most educators believe this problem can be reduced by intensive counselling. The researcher tried to find out whether schools and class teachers hold counselling sessions and got results shown below.

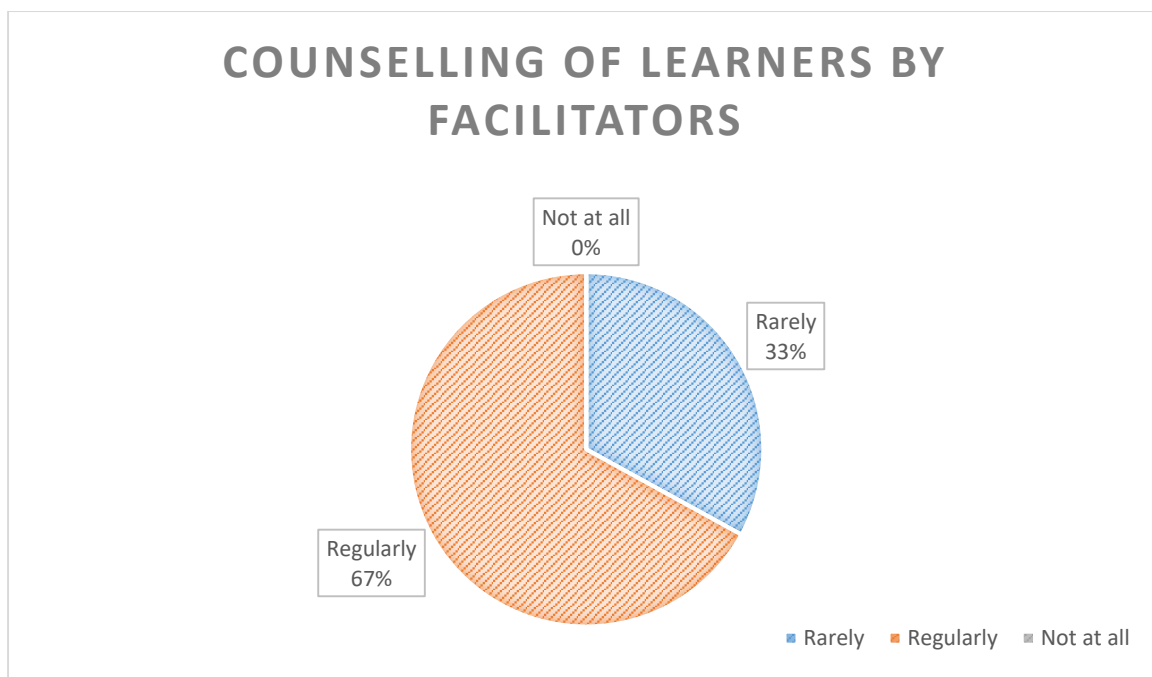


Figure 4: Counselling of learners by facilitators

The above pie-chart shows responses given by facilitators on whether they counsel learners with social learners with social problems in their classes and how often they do such. Most facilitators (67%) revealed that they counsel their students regularly, while a few number (33%) said that they rarely do that and none said they do not do it all. This implies that each facilitator at least counsels learners whether on a regular basis or at intervals. Counselling reduces the risk of indulging into unruly behaviours among youths.

This was complimented by the facilitators’ responses on whether their schools hold counselling sessions as shown by the table below.

Table 4.6: Schools which hold counselling sessions

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	11	92
No	0	0
Not sure	1	8

Total	12	100
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The above table is based on the facilitators' responses on whether their schools hold counselling sessions or not. The majority of respondents (92%) said that their schools hold counselling sessions with only 8% representing one facilitator who was not sure whether counselling takes place in his school or not.

The above results show that schools are trying their best to keep learners at school by addressing social and emotional challenges among learners.

The above results were solicited by responses given as opinions by facilitators on ways of eradicating school dropout. A facilitator from school A's remarks:

Counsel learners, make them value education.

Another facilitator from school B's view:

Guidance and counselling. Having policies/programs that assist low income parents.

A third facilitator from school C said:

Educating people on children's rights, as well as carrying out awareness campaigns on gender inequality and education.

A facilitator from school D also commented like:

The government should create jobs. They should also put more money in the BEAM fund.

School heads were also in line with the facilitators as they were quoted as follows:

School head from school A:

The feeding scheme helps to keep learners who come from hunger stricken families.

School B head comments:

Schools should seek funding on behalf of vulnerable children so that all learners have access to education.

School C head said:

Intensify Guidance and Counselling in schools, engage community to identify orphans in the community, provide stationery for learners who are struggling to make ends meet.

School D head asserts:

Schools need to hold reproductive health lessons especially with adolescents.

The above views reveal that facilitators and school heads, as shown by the questionnaires and interviews, are in agreement that the school as an educational institution should play a major role in keeping learners at school until completion. The school knows the strategies to apply in order to eradicate the dropout problem. Also, a close analysis of the questionnaires and interviews revealed that some facilitators lack an in-depth knowledge on how to keep learners at school.

4.3 Discussion of data

4.3.1 Facilitators' understanding of causes of school dropout

This study had all the facilitators acknowledging that there are learners who left school before completion in their classes as well as schools. According to Johnson (2003), dropout is usually associated with the girl child and is prevalent in child headed families. Most responses pointed the causes of dropout to poverty which is prevalent due to child headed families especially in the area under study where there are a lot of orphans who are left alone or under the care of the elderly who have no source of income. The research also revealed that the socio-economic status of the community under study is another cause of dropout whereby learners come to school without adequate school requirements. Policies marginalise and bottleneck the education of the indigenous people (Zvogbo in Ngwenya, 2016). This implies that some causes are due to policy whereby the curriculum sometimes adopts an alien region which antagonises local religions and culture causing conflicts. Research has shown that some children leave

school because their religion does not allow them to shave their hair while school policy requires that.

Facilitators and school heads understudy also associate dropout with peer pressure and the local environment. The community understudy is an old location where the majority of people are unemployed and most are street vendors. Some youths are also observed vending even during school hours. Learners are always absent from school because they envy their friends who have already left school and may resort to that also. Sagenmuller (2017) asserts that many common triggers may lead to students dropping studies and also points to problems which lead to significant decrease in student retention such as pregnancy, mental illness and drug abuse. Arshi (2019) also echoes the same sentiments when they state that a transition from the cohesive environment of a primary school to the anonymity of high school may take a toll on the academic interest of students. This implies as cited by respondents that, the school environment and the local environment also cause learners to leave school. Research has revealed that facilitators and school heads are aware that children are leaving school and they suspect the causes of such.

4.3.2 Effects of school dropout

Alvares et al (2013) posited that school dropout inhibits the full participation in the community life due to deficits in interpretation and expression skills. They continue to state that, leaving school prematurely implies disproportionately higher risks of poverty and social exclusion throughout an individual's life. Results from this research also imply that children who do not complete a course of study have their future ruined, hence the saying 'education is the key to success'.

It has been observed that most girls who practice prostitution and some get into early marriages are school dropouts. Holcamp (2009) asserts that in rural areas girls' dropout is higher because some parents believe they cannot educate someone who will eventually get married soon. Boys

indulge in criminal practices such as thieving, housebreaking, most of which are influenced by alcohol and substance abuse. Martin and Halpern (2006) note that the decision to leave school not only affects the individual but consequently, the whole society suffers. It is also very difficult to get employment without academic and professional qualifications in a country where graduates are unemployed. This is supported by Arshi et al (2019) who assert that minimum acceptable qualification is concluding a vocational course or higher education degree.

Participants also associated the effects of school dropout with being a misfit in the society. Clifford et al (2011) assert that failing to complete high school leads to unemployment, a life of poverty and could lead to crime and eventually jail time. Education grooms a human being into a learned and educated citizen. People who can associate with others, well learnt the 'ubuntu' values at school as impacted by the curriculum. Children are educated to become future leaders, so if they leave school before gaining enough skills they become a nuisance in their community while their colleagues who acquired education become an asset to their communities. In a nutshell, dropping out of school leaves a long lasting bruise to the community and to the individual.

4.3.3 Ways of eradicating early school leaving

Facilitators and school heads who participated in this research are in agreement that the school needs to play a pivotal role in educating its community. According to Alvares et al (2013), schools are required to work for and find solutions so that all students may reach a certain level of qualifications. They continue to say that combating school dropout is therefore a task of schools, who have to find ways of teaching even those who no longer want to learn.

Results from this research revealed that schools are carrying out counselling sessions, sourcing donations for the less privileged learners and also engaging unemployed parents in income generating projects so as to fund their children's education. The Education Act (2006)

stipulates that one of the functions of the School Development Committee is to source funds for the school so as to cater for the welfare of learners and staff. A certain school head echoed the same sentiments by urging School Development Committees to source donations to provide resources for the less privileged and learners with special needs.

Another facilitator also said that the curriculum needs to be revisited so as to cater for all learners, hence the updated competence based curriculum which advocates for the environment as a source and resource for learning. The Education Act (1987) points that the learning environment needs to be conducive for all learners regardless of race, tribe, language and background. This therefore implies that the school environment should be accommodative of children even from impoverished backgrounds.

A school head from school D, stated that educators also need to change their attitude towards unruly behaviour and the education system as a whole. He said that educating the nation should be more of an inborn trait than a career. UNESCO (2005) further argues that the reasons that contribute to school leaving should be addressed in the classroom, further pointing the need for educators to be view themselves as an integral part in curbing school dropout.

A facilitator however, put the blame on the parents and the local community stating that parents are to be role models and the community should shun unethical practices which attract learners towards leaving school. The 1994 Salamanca Statement on inclusive education encourages all governments to prioritise policy, legal and budgetary provisions to improve their education systems to take into account the wide diversity of learners' unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. It is therefore the duty of the school and the community, to work hand in hand in making sure that all children of school going age do so.

Summary

The foregoing chapter, chapter 4, laid down the results from questionnaire using tables, graphs, charts and qualitative analysis. These results were based on the inputs from twelve facilitators

and their school heads from the four schools understudy. These questionnaires and interviews allowed the researcher to do triangulation with the results to obtain the real facts. The focus was on causes of school dropout, their effects as well as the way forward. The research revealed that causes of school dropout emanate from the school environment as well as the local environment, leading to poverty and a devastated society of uneducated citizens. Facilitators and school heads showed some enthusiasm in trying to curb the problem as they highlighted some brilliant solutions such as finding ways of funding education for the poor and special needs learners and also conducting awareness campaigns to arm the community on the importance of education. All these were evidenced in the questionnaires and interviews.

The next chapter, chapter 5, presents the summary of the whole study and the researcher's conclusions as well as recommendations, all based on the data presented in the foregoing chapter.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This is a concluding chapter where the researcher gave a summary of the research as a whole as well as offering conclusions based on the collected, presented, analysed and discussed in the previous chapter. A carefully selected sampling of views and opinions of educators and school heads from Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district in Bulawayo provided data which revealed an insight into the causes of school dropout, the effects of that dropout to the school, the community and the learners themselves, and also an exploration of ways of curbing that problem.

Certain questions were raised which emerged from data analysed, which were taken into consideration in this chapter through the presentation of recommendations anticipated. High hopes were that such recommendations would be considered and used to reduce the dropout rate.

5.2 Summary

This study was based on the examination of causes of school dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo. The main issues discussed in the study were, causes of school dropout, effects of school dropout, and ways of eradicating this dropout.

The research problem was motivated by the high rate of school dropout experienced in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi district in Bulawayo metropolitan province. The study was therefore carried to find out the factors which contribute to this high rate of dropout at both primary and secondary school levels in this cluster and consequently, suggest ways of eradicating or reducing this high rate of school dropout.

The research methodology used was based on a qualitative approach, with the researcher relying on using words rather than numbers and induce hypotheses from the data collected in that case study. This methodology was most suited since the research was conducted in natural settings than a controlled environment. It also allowed the subjects of the research to play a role in interpreting the outcome.

Snowball sampling was used so as to ensure trust between the researcher and participants. A small number of individuals who have the characteristic required who were then used as informants to bring about others who qualify to be included and so on. Random sampling was then used to select participants who were used as respondents. The study was carried out with a sample of a total of sixteen participants from four schools in the locality, thus, three facilitators and the head from each school. To address the laid down research questions the researcher used the qualitative research methodology which derived the case study design to gather data and discern the real situation on the causes of school dropout. The adoption of this design necessitated the researcher to get the first hand information from schools which were under study.

The researcher gathered both qualitative and quantitative data from facilitators and school heads using online interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaires and interviews were meant to be completed physically, but at the height of a pandemic and lockdown restrictions the researcher had to find safer means of data collection. Social media was then used as well as phone calls to gather adequate data. Observations were not done because they required the researcher to see the activities being done, for example, counselling sessions, BEAM selection and many more. The data generated were analysed using frequency count, simple percentage and narrations.

Findings from this study revealed that facilitators and school heads were aware that their community and their schools were hardly hit by the dropout problem, and they were seeing the effects. The respondents concurred on most factors that contributed to school dropout at school and community. Poverty, socio-economic status and school environment were identified as the most contributing causes of school dropout according to the respondents.

Basing on the findings some recommendations were made on how this dropout issue can be eradicated. It was realised that it starts from the teacher's attitude in the classroom, the curriculum's flexibility to cater for different abilities, the school's capability to cater for the less privileged as well as the community's attitude towards education. It was recommended that the community be concetised on how to keep learners at school and also the school playing its part. Involvement of all stakeholders can curb the problem.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the above findings, conclusions were drawn under the following themes:

5.3.1 Facilitators' understanding of causes of school dropout

The facilitators were aware that learners are dropping out of school due to various reasons, like peer pressure, poverty and cultural influence. As such, the facilitators were doing their best by trying to counsel leaners and flex the curriculum to suit their individual abilities. Schools through the school heads were also aware as they had a record of learners who leave school every year.

Schools also feel other stakeholders are not playing their part to try and curb the dropout issue, for example, they are saying BEAM fund is too little compared to the needy learners.

5.3.2 Effects of school dropout

It was also highlighted that the dropout problem has negative effects to the learner, the school and the society at large. Facilitators under study associated crime, drug and substance abuse, poverty, teenage pregnancy and early marriages to mention but a few, to early leaving of school. These effects are very high and observed in the old locations of Njube and Old Lobengula where the schools understudy are located. Therefore, due to such it was recommended that the missing link be found to pave a way forward.

5.3.3 Ways of eradicating school dropout

Facilitators and school heads as participants in the research had some noble ideas on how school dropout can be fought with, in their school and community at large. They were already carrying out counselling sessions in schools and classrooms. They suggested that other stakeholders should also chip in through funding for the less privileged learners. It was also highlighted that schools lack reproductive health lessons to prevent early marriages and teenage pregnancies. Most respondents also highlighted the issue of the BEAM funding being too little and schools not being fully engaged in income generating projects to avail resources especially for the learners with special needs.

It also came to light that parental involvement also plays a vital role because children who leave school are at home with their parents who are doing nothing with some even giving them away to early marriages. It is high time the law is enforced to bring to book the violators of children's right to education.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations which try to address the dropout problem.

- The Ministry of Education should come up with a policy which ensures that children's rights are not violated in schools. Some children leave school due to poverty whereby they cannot afford school requirements. Some leave school because the nature of the curriculum is not accommodative. Some learners leave because some teachers are not trained to cater for different abilities. It is therefore the Ministry's baby to nurse.
- It has also been noted that poverty stands at number one in the causes of school dropout. It is the duty of parents and other stakeholders to source funds for the schools. School heads highlighted that BEAM funding is too little. Parents can have income generating projects in the school such as nutrition garden to try and cater for orphans and vulnerable children. Local business people can also be concentrated to plough back to the community by funding education for the less privileged.
- The law should also be tightened on people who impregnate teenagers and worse on those who give them away to early marriages. It has been observed that this is a very common trend among residents of Njube and Old Lobengula where the majority of young mothers did not complete school due to such. It should be enforced that all children of school going age should be at school under whatever circumstance.
- Schools in the area should consider having non-formal education classes as per the competence based curriculum requirement, so that those who were less fortunate to leave school early can be given a second chance. This can be done through practical subjects like Agriculture and ICT. Vocational education can help them to be self-reliant and reduce poverty in the community.
- On the issue of distance from home to school which leads to absconding as highlighted by one facilitator, schools should stick to policy as stipulated that learners should be enrolled in the schools nearest to their homes. The zoning idea was very ideal because

all learners belonged to the locality. Learners who walk long distances or board buses to school are usually late, absent, abscond and end up totally leaving the school. It is an issue of concentrating parents and schools to reconsider the zoning system.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

A number of weaknesses were identified while undertaking this research. These weaknesses could be tackled by a further research to better explore this broad ill of school dropout in urban areas, particularly this case study of Masiye cluster. Recommendations to better address these weaknesses are also noted thereafter.

Weaknesses

- The sample did not include the most affected by the dropout – the ‘dropped out’ individual and/or their guardian
- Observations on school environment activities had to be narrated than actually observed due to the current lockdown regulations

Recommendations

The recommendations to address the noted weakness are as follows:

- Involve more respondents such as parents, other stakeholders as well as the learners themselves as respondents

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire For Teachers

My name is Nokuthula D. Gumpo, a student doing a Bachelor of Education Degree in Educational Management and Leadership. I am carrying out a research under the topic, "An examination of causes of school dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo".

May I please invite you to be a participant in my research, and be assured that the information you provide will be used for academic purposes only and will be treated with confidentiality.

Please do not write your name or the name of your school on any part of this document.

Respond by means of a mark [x] in the appropriate box, or writing where applicable.

1. Age range: 18 - 29 [] 30 - 39 [] 40 - 49 [] 50 - 59 [] 60 and above []

2. Sex: Male [] Female []

3. Marital Status: Married [] Single [] Widow []

4. Highest academic qualification:

O' Level [] A' Level [] Other (specify): _____

5. Highest professional qualification:

C.E [] D.E [] Undergraduate Degree [] Master Degree [] PhD []

Other (specify): _____

6. Teaching experience:

1 - 5 years [] 6 -10 years [] 11-20 years [] 21-30 years [] More than 30 years []

7. Occupation/ Position: _____ (indicate) Primary [] Secondary []

8. How many learners did you have in your class in 2018 and 2019 respectively?

2018: _____ 2019: _____

9. Are there any learners who dropped out of school in your class in those two years?

Yes [] No []

10. If you ticked 'Yes' on question 9, how many learners dropped out during each of the two years? 2018: _____ 2019: _____

11. Learners drop out of school before completion due to certain factors.

Strongly agreed [] Agreed [] Disagreed [] Strongly Disagree []

12. How often do you counsel learners with social problems in your class?

Not at all [] Rarely [] Regularly []

13. Does your school hold counselling sessions for learners with social problems?

Yes [] No [] Not sure []

14. To what extent do you attribute the dropout to the environment?

Not at all [] To a limited extent [] To a larger extent [] Not sure []

15. To what extent have you tried to find out why these learners drop out school before completion?

Not at all [] To a limited extent [] To a larger extent []

16. Which of these factors do you think have contributed most to dropout at your school? Rank them on a scale of 1-8, where 1 is the highest contributor and 8 is the lowest contributor.

Poverty []

School environment []

Culture []

Religion []

Socio-economic status []

Peer pressure []

Local environment []

Distance from home to school []

17. Which sex is usually affected by this dropout rate?

Males [] Female [] Not sure []

18. What do you think causes more males/females to leave school?

19. What do you think are the major effects of this dropout?

20. In your opinion how do you think this school dropout problem can be eradicated?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for School Heads

My name is Nokuthula D. Gumpo, a student doing a Bachelor of Education Degree in Educational Management and Leadership. I am carrying out a research under the topic, "An examination of causes of school dropout in Masiye cluster of Mzilikazi District in Bulawayo". May I please invite you to be a participant in my research, and be assured that the information you provide will be used for academic purposes only.

1. Age range: 18 - 29 [] 30 - 39 [] 40 - 49 [] 50 - 59 [] 60 and above []

2. Sex: Male [] Female []

3. Marital Status: Married [] Single [] Widow []

4. Highest academic qualification:

O' Level [] A' Level [] Other (specify): _____

5. Highest professional qualification:

C.E [] D.E [] Undergraduate Degree [] Master Degree [] PhD []

Other (specify): _____

6. Teaching experience:

1 - 5 years [] 6 -10 years [] 11-20 years [] 21-30 years [] More than 30 years []

7. Occupation/ Position: _____ (indicate) Primary [] Secondary []

8. What do you understand by the term 'School dropout'?

9. There are learners who drop out of school before completion. How do you rate your school in this regard?

10. How many learners have so far dropped out of school in the past 2 years - 2018 and 2019.

How many males and how many females?

11. According to your view, what are the causes of this dropout?

12. What support measures are conducted by your school to try and reduce the dropout rate?

13. What are the effects of this dropout to the community at large?

14. What do you think should be done by various stakeholders to reduce the dropout cases or to totally eradicate them?

Appendix C: Letter from University

Appendix D: Letter from the Ministry of Primary And Secondary Education