FACTORs AFFECTING GIRLS' COMPLETION OF BASIC EDUCATION: THE CASE OF SOME BASIC SCHOOLS IN CHONGWE DISTRICT

BY

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of Master of Education in Sociology of Education

The University of Zambia
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, Rose Mumba Mbolela do hereby solemnly declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it has never been previously submitted for degree at this or any other University.

Signed...........................................

Date..............01/07/2010.....................
APPROVAL

The University of Zambia approves this dissertation of R. M. Mbolela as fulfilling part of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Sociology of Education.

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DEDICATION

To my husband Jacob Mwitwa, my late father Philip Mbolela, my mother Molly Mwansa Mbolela, my children, brothers and sisters and their spouses, my nieces and nephews who supported and encouraged me throughout my study, I dedicate this to you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of this work was due to the support and help received from many people. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr Austin Cheyeka, for the support and guidance he gave me. He was in most cases unfortunate to read my barely incomprehensible scripts, but made very useful comments.

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<td>District Education Board Secretary</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>FAWEZA</td>
<td>Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>GRZ</td>
<td>Government of the Republic of Zambia</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>MNEI</td>
<td>Ministry of National Education of Indonesia</td>
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<td>PAGE</td>
<td>Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the factors that contribute to girls’ low completion of basic education in some selected schools of Chongwe District of Lusaka Province. The objectives of the study were to find out if the attitudes of girls towards school contribute to their low completion of basic education; to investigate if the school environment contributes to low completion of basic school education and to find out if the home environment has an effect on low completion of basic education among girls in some selected schools of Chongwe district.

A case study design was used by the researcher. The target population for the study comprised teachers, pupils and parents in some selected schools in Chongwe district. A sample total of 139 respondents were selected. It consisted of sixty (60) teachers, forty two (42) pupils, and thirty (30) parents.

The study was guided by the interaction theories such as labelling, where there is relationship between class and interaction. Another theory which guided the study was the conflict perspective of social stratification, where there is a relationship between class and academic achievement.

Data was collected using questionnaires, semi structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Questionnaires were administered to the teachers while interviews were conducted with parents and Focus Group Discussions with the girls. Quantitative data was presented in percentages and frequency tables using a hand calculator while data from interviews and Focus Group Discussions was analysed qualitatively by coding and grouping similar themes together using constant comparative techniques.
The target population comprised all the head teachers, teachers, pupils in grades eight and nine and parents of pupils in all the seven basic schools under study in Chongwe District.

Data was largely analysed qualitatively. Data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes. Some qualitative data was converted manually and summarized in order to obtain concise measures of the data by using descriptive statistics. The data was then presented quantitatively as percentages and in frequency tables using a hand calculator.

The findings of the study revealed that girls’ low completion of basic education was affected by girls’ attitudes towards school, physical facilities found at schools, lack of models at school and home, parents’ educational levels, distances between homes and schools and the poor relationships that existed between teachers and girls.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Before independence, Zambia inherited an educational system that was under developed and remarkably more in favour of boys than girls. Soon after the attainment of independence, Zambia embarked on the development of the educational system through a number of policy reforms. The first of its kind was the 1966 "Education Act". A major stride that the government made was the 1977 "Education Reforms" in which it sought to make education more Zambian – the education that would meet the needs of and aspiration of Zambians and function as a powerful tool for the Zambian society’s progress (MoE, 1977).

After the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Women’s Movement drew up its own priorities and action. Under education for the girl-child was a call to re-admit girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy. When Forum for Women in Education (FAWEZA) was established on 8th March, 1996, it added its voice to the call for policy change with regard to girls who were expelled due to pregnancy.

In 1996 the government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) had realised that for a long time there had been a wide gap in terms of girls’ and boys’ education; there were more boys than girls who were able to attain formal education. In view of this, the government, through MoE, introduced another policy document – "Educating Our Future", which was aimed at investing in human resources development through proper education at all levels. This policy has to a large extent tried to address the issues affecting the girls’ education. The current national policy has placed emphasis on factors of educational provision as access, equity and quality maintenance at all service delivery points in the system (MoE, 1996). Through this policy the government started building girls’ schools in order to allow more girls to enter and complete formal education. A lower cut off point for girls’ selection to Grades 8 and 10 were also
introduced. This has been referred to as positive discrimination and affirmative action by the MOE (MoE, 2005).

Educating girls is the single most important step governments can take to improve the well being of their citizens and their economies. Investment in the education of women and girls pays significant dividends in economic growth, improved health, productivity and quality of life for both women and men and the nation as a whole.

GRZ (2005) states that, prioritising the enrolment and retention of girls in schools is critical as the first step in promoting equal opportunities for women in Zambia. It has been proven that increased education for girls has a dramatic impact on their subsequent achievements and on the status of their families, socially and economically. It is also important to note that, education of girls and boys in Zambia, at all levels has been the main focus of the MOE with respect to access and retention. Since 1994 the MOE has been paying special attention to the gender dimension in education and in particular to the problems faced by girls in getting into Basic and High schools.

It is generally accepted that improving girls’ education not only has an intrinsic value, but ultimately promotes improved family welfare and child health. Educated women make better choices for themselves and their families, particularly regarding health and nutrition. Several studies have shown that investment in girl’s education is indeed an investment in the family, community and the nation (GRZ, 2005).

In Zambia, the education of girls has been the major concern of the MOE. This is with respect to their male counterparts (GRZ, 2005). Following the Jomtien Conference of 1990 in China where gender, equity and equality were prioritised as the fifth Education For All (EFA) goal, girl’s education in Zambia has received significant attention from 1994 to 2000. The MOE endeavours to eliminate gender disparities and promote social equity through provision of basic and high school education to all. A number of studies conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s, found that despite the many years of educating girls in Zambia, they still lagged behind their male counterparts in terms of
access, performance, participation, progression and completion rate at both basic and high school levels.

The MOE is fully aware of the problems girls are facing in terms of their education. For instance the MOE is concerned about the wastage, which results from girls dropping out of school when they get pregnant. The above concerns, among others, led the GRZ and Civil Society Organisations to come up with a number of interventions to address the situation on the education for the girls. Some of these include the 1998, 50:50 per cent policy, which stipulated that as much as possible the number of girls who enter grade 1, 8 and 10 should be equal to the number of boys; and the MOE ’Programme for the Advancement of Girls’ Education (PAGE) introduced in 2004 a package of interventions aimed at improving girls’ participation at primary level.

Indeed completion of basic education by girls has been one of the major concerns in the Zambian education system. According to MOE (1996), a major policy objective of the government is to promote equality in access to, participation in and successful completion of education at all levels, irrespective of gender, social class, or disability. However, MoE (1996:65) observed that “Institutional, socio-cultural and personal factors combine to impede girls in realising their potential through education. These include the distance of the schools from the girls’ home, fees and levies to be paid at the school, and negative image of women and girls portrayed by many school-books”.

Oxfam (2005) observes that there were approximately 100 million school aged children in the world who were not in school of whom 55 per cent were girls. In the developing world, 76 per cent of girls complete primary education compared to 85 per cent of their male counterparts. In sub-Saharan Africa only 46 per cent of girls and 66 per cent of boys complete primary education. This observation is supported by Loreta (2001) who pointed out that in Africa there are fewer girls in primary schools and higher levels of education which may be due to cultural norms that assume (often falsely) that girls will not be bread-winners for their families. Thus girls are prohibited from attending or are required to leave school in order to do house chores.
In Zambia, enrolment in Grade 1 is almost equal to that of boys. According to MOE available statistics girls’ enrolment in grade 1 is almost equal to that of boys. In subsequent grades, however, the number of girls decreases steadily, with more girls dropping-out from Grade 4 onwards. For every 100 girls who begin primary school, only 70 complete the full primary course, 23 proceed into Grade 8, 9 into grade 10, and 7 sit for the School Certificate Examination in grade 12. Opportunities for boys are considerably better, with 87 out of every 100 grade 1 entrants completing Grade 7, 37 entering grade 8 classes, 16 going forward to grade 10 level and 15 sitting for the School certificate Examination (MoE, 1996).

Kelly (1999), has also observed that almost half the girls of school-going age in Zambia are not in school, a problem which has larger dimensions in rural than in urban areas. Kelly (1999) has aptly argued that in Zambia, rural circumstances are so different from urban circumstances that one could speak of the absence of a culture of formal education in rural areas and its presence in towns. This picture is true about Chongwe district which has 96% of its schools in the outskirts of the town. In Chongwe district most schools record low completion rate of basic education among girls.

Therefore, this study was done to establish the factors that lead to low completion rate of basic education among girls in some basic schools of Chongwe district. Th research does not make any claims at comprehensiveness but derives information, as already stated from a case study design.

**Statement of the problem**

Studies in many parts of the world and in Zambia have revealed that girls experience low completion of basic education, especially as they get to higher levels of the education system. Like in any other Sub-Saharan countries there are a number of factors that may lead to low completion rate among girls in schools in Zambia. The major concern of this study was to identify factors that may lead to girls’ low completion rate of basic education in some basic schools of Chongwe District.
Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors leading to low completion of basic education among girls in Chongwe District by employing a questionnaire and face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews.

Objectives of the study

The study had the following three specific objectives:

1. To investigate if the attitudes of girls towards school lead to their low completion rate of basic education in selected basic schools in Chongwe District.
2. To determine if the school environment contributes to low completion rate of basic education among girls in selected basic schools in Chongwe District.
3. To establish if the girls’ home environment contributes to low completion rate of basic education among girls in selected basic schools in Chongwe District.

Research questions

The study had the following research questions:

1. Do the attitudes of girls towards school lead to their low completion rate of basic education in selected basic schools in Chongwe District?
2. Does the school environment contribute to low completion rate of basic education among girls in selected basic schools in Chongwe District?
3. Does the home environment of girls contribute to their low completion rate of basic education in selected basic schools in Chongwe District?

Significance of the study

Girls’ low completion of basic education can have a negative impact on their future lives. Therefore, knowledge of factors leading to girls’ low completion of basic education is crucial to parents, teachers, policy makers and other stakeholders interested in the education of girls. It is believed that education is a right for every individual and plays a vital role in one’s life and in national development. It is hoped that the findings of the study may be of help in creating awareness among parents, teachers and administrators on the importance of girls attaining basic education. The findings of this study might also be helpful to teachers, parents, policy makers and
other stakeholders in education in coming up with strategies to attract girls to remain in school especially in Chongwe district.

**Operational definitions of terms in the study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic performance</td>
<td>intellectual attainment of a pupil.</td>
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<td>Low completion rate</td>
<td>proportion of those girls who fail to complete the basic school cycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural schools</td>
<td>schools located far from main towns of Zambia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban schools</td>
<td>schools located in main towns of Zambia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>this includes all aspects found in the school – physical and social factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home background</td>
<td>refers to the type of home environment from which an individual comes. The following may be included in home background: pupils’ residence; relationship of pupil to parents/guardians; parents’ marital status; economic status of the parents/guardians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphans</td>
<td>children who have lost one or both parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class</td>
<td>is the level of students’ families whose stratum within a social structure is considered lower. This category comprises parents/guardians in manual or unskilled occupations, vendors, rock breakers, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/guardians education</td>
<td>is the level of formal education attained by pupil’s parents or guardians.</td>
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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction
This chapter reviews research and other relevant secondary sources on the nature and factors leading to girls’ low completion basic education in Zambia. An attempt is made to include literature from the West, Africa and Zambia.

Literature from Asia
Studies dealing with girls’ education have shown some factors leading to low completion rate of girls in schools. It has been found that thousands of girls all over the world are affected by harmful traditional practices. These are institutionalised practices that cause physical harm, with multiple psychological and sociological impacts. Examples are early marriage, son preference, early pregnancy, dowry or bride price and traditional birth practices that discriminate against girls. Loretta (2001) perceptively points out that “harmful traditional practices against girls persist despite their extraordinarily harmful nature.” And in all cases, these have long term consequences for girls’ physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual development.

In India, Marrie (2005) found that lack of infrastructure resulted in girls’ low completion rate in schools. In most cases, the schools are single classrooms while others lack classrooms. The average teacher to pupil ratio in India is 1:3. Some are single teacher schools and most rural schools lack female teachers. Above all, girls’ enrolment still continues to lag behind that of boys. The archaic caste system has left the mark on education and continues to influence it to date, affecting the girl child. Traditionally, education is confined to the elite. Girls from poor families do not have the chance to enrol, they are considered as a temporary property.

In Nepal, UNESCO (2005) reported that naturally the problems of school attendance are more pronounced in some communities and figures vary according to gender, location and social status. From an early age, girls are expected to assist in rearing younger
siblings, and share in the arduous day to day tasks of running a household. This frequently means that even if enrolled in school, a girl child may not have enough hours in the day to complete her domestic tasks and attend class. Even if she manages to do both, the physical and mental strain is not conducive to learning.

**Literature from Africa**

A review of African literature shows that sub-Saharan Africa has some of the most significant factors that lead to African girls’ low completion rate in schools. In some countries, enrolment is still a problem.

In dealing with issues affecting girls in schools, it is important to mention that some people generally see girls as not interested in education while others view girls as innocent and attribute the outcome of low completion rate in schools to poor environment (Du Plessis, 2002). Poor physical layout of a school, lack of water and poor sanitation contribute to low completion rate of basic school education by girls. Sanitary facilities, particularly in large urban schools, may be inadequate for the number of pupils, especially girls. Earlier practices of paying attention to these and other factors in the school environment have almost finished. Both parents and teachers have tended to concentrate more on the academic performance of children than on their personal and immediate environment and health needs (Du Plessis, 2002).

In Tanzania, UNICEF (2003) revealed the main factors leading to girls’ low completion rate of basic education as social-cultural beliefs and practices. Additionally early marriage and pregnancy prevented girls from attending school. Before the government of Tanzania, through the Ministry of Education, introduced the re-entry policy, girls who got pregnant were prevented from attending school and pregnancy was considered to be the girl’s fault.

Gender-biased socialization in school was another factor affecting girls in schools in Tanzania. While assertive behaviour is promoted among boys, passive behaviour is encouraged among girls. Girls are called on to perform domestic duties for teachers at
school, such as fetching water, reinforcing gender stereotypes and taking time away from learning. UNICEF (2003) also mentioned that economic factors affected girls in schools.

UNESCO (2005) states that, in Kenya tremendous effort has been made to address the root cause of girls' dropout from school. The major events that have facilitated the discussion of the problem include the National Symposium on Education of Girls in March 1994, in which the Ministry addressed various issues including re-entry of the teenage mother into school. The Ministry saw the need to: adopt a policy of re-entry to permit pregnant girls back into the school system after delivery; set up special birthing centre for young mothers where they could continue with formal education or specialized training while breast feeding their babies; and create out of school opportunities for out of school girls and exploit informal sector apprenticeships for them. In addition, introduce flexible models of attendance so that institutions operate at full capacity during the day and evening, throughout the week, month and year to allow for full attendance and completion of courses.

UNESCO (2005), also showed that most studies conducted in the region have consistently identified economic factors as key determinants of girls' participation in school. In most of the countries in the region, the direct and indirect costs of schooling have been found to be a major deterrent on girls' enrolment and persistence in school as there is a strong parental preference to educate boys over girls especially amongst the poor households. In order to mitigate the effects of direct and indirect costs of schooling, governments have abolished fees at primary level, introduced school fee waivers targeting girls, bursary and scholarship schemes for girls.

However it was noted that despite the abolition of school fees, parents were often unable to meet indirect school costs. This posed a big challenge on the retention of those enrolled.

OXFAM (2005) reported that girls in Central and West Africa had the widest gap in enrolment compared to boys. In Guinea Bissau, for example, just over 60 per cent of girls as compared to 100 per cent of boys enrolled in primary school. In more remote
areas of Mali, OXFAM found that government statistics indicate that girls’ gross enrolment rate was as low as 29 per cent. So, if primary school enrolment figures for rural girls were so low, then one could presume that the number of girls who completed primary and secondary school was extremely low.

Elsewhere in Africa, social-cultural factors lead to girls’ low completion rate. These factors refer to a range of issues working against an individual’s position in a society. These factors later lead to a call for women to develop themselves and struggle for the ending of those cultural and social norms that discriminate against them (Obi, 2001). These cultural factors are reflected in the pattern of behaviour, belief, preferences, customs and traditions, which account for gender-based differences within a society. It can be said therefore, that the social-cultural environment in which the girl-child operate does not motivate her to attain her full potential.

According to UNESCO (2005), most studies conducted in the region have consistently identified economic factors as key determinants of girls’ participation in school. In most of the countries in the region, the direct and indirect costs of schooling have been found to be a major deterrent on girls’ enrolment and persistence in school as there is a strong parental preference to educate boys over girls especially amongst the poor households.

Tietjen (1991) acknowledged that, pregnancy is a major cause of dropout amongst adolescent girls in upper basic and high levels across the Sub-Saharan region. In the past, girls in the majority of countries faced permanent expulsion from school once found to be pregnant. Several of the countries have now introduced policies of readmission that allow teenage mothers to compete school. In Botswana for example, pregnancy policy has been reviewed to allow girls to go back to school after delivery. However, there is evidence that where this policy has been implemented, it has been more of a reactive than a preventive strategy.

Bailey (2000) states that the issue of school dropout because of pregnancy in Kenya is as old as the school system itself but it is in the last two decades that the Ministry of Education has made significant progress in re-admitting girls who dropout because of
pregnancy. Tietjen (1991) and Bailey (2000) have shown that a number of the African countries do realise that a number of girls could not complete basic and high school education due pregnancies.

In his research conducted in West Africa, Ashimolowo (2007: 45) found that girls are often seen as future wives and mothers and parental attitudes towards them are largely influenced by social-cultural factors which could have both a positive and negative impact on their well-being.

In Nigeria, like in many developing countries, the girl-child is marginalised educationally, technologically, socially and in nearly every aspect of life. In the survey conducted by Ashimolowo (2007), it was concluded that marginalization of the girl-child was due to cultural and economic constraints.

UNICEF (2005) also found that parents' attitude towards girls' education was very negative, especially in rural areas of Angola. Parents in rural areas needed to be convinced that educating girls was the most important thing one could do. It was also found that high cost of living, long distances and expensive transport to school were among the main reasons that kept girls out of school. When family income dictates that not all children can be educated or provided for, it is always the girl child that is pulled out of school to pave way for the boy child to continue with his education. In primary schools, girls are day scholars and travel long distances which decreases their productivity since they arrive in school already tired. At the same time they arrive in school late, missing first lessons of the day and get back home too tired for any meaningful studies. Girls also miss school when there are chores to be done at home or there is a sick family member to nurse.

In his research conducted in different countries such as Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda, Torlo (2003) found that extra curricular and out of school factors alluded to by other researchers above played a big role in girls' education. Long distances, sexual harassment by classmates, teachers and males in the community, and inefficient use of her time contributed to making attendance in school poor. When all these
persist, the girl child tends to dislike school and therefore fails to complete school; conditions at home, on the way to school and the community prevent her from having a meaningful and conducive environment for education.

Research has shown that home based factors are not the only causes of girls’ low completion rate. There are also other factors within the classroom and school such as poor performance in many subjects, especially Mathematics and Science. These are compulsory subjects in primary schools and girls have no choice but to take them (Rita, 2003).

Furthermore, Rita (ibid) found that there was a complete absence of female positive role models in academic fields and in many communities in the rural areas. Role models in villages who mainly did simple jobs such as selling in the markets or by the roadside, cooking and serving food, had a great influence on the young girls in the community who believed that these women, with no formal education, earned money and were well off. They therefore did not see the need or importance of a formal education.

**Literature from Zambia**

In Zambia, the Ministry of Education (MOE: 1996) states that Government has paid special attention to the education of girls considering the fact that they have lagged behind for a very long time. In 1994, the MoE with the support from the United Nations Childrens’ Emergency Fund (UNICEF), embarked on a campaign to promote the programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE). Because of this programme, a number of studies were conducted to establish factors that have affected education of girls in Zambia. A number of policy recommendations and interventions to address the girls’ education have since been implemented. One such intervention was the introduction of the re-entry policy. Under this policy, school girls who become pregnant could now continue with their education programme after giving birth. In the same year, in 1994, under PAGE, some campaigns were done to promote the advancement of the girls in education at basic and high school level.
Despite the introduction of many policy recommendations and interventions to address the girls’ education, girls continue to lag behind because of various factors that affect them. In Zambia, different researchers have identified similar factors as leading to the low completion rate of girls in schools. These include educational background, unfair division of labour, long distances to schools, pregnancies, early marriages, negative values and attitudes towards education by the girls themselves, and low expectations of girls’ performance from both the parents and teachers.

Kasonde-Ng’andu et al. (1999) also noted that various reasons are responsible for the noted drop out rate among the girls in Zambia. Pregnancy is one of the major reasons contributing to girls dropping out of school. Other factors leading to girls’ dropping out of school are; lack of role models at both community and school level and low parental expectations of what a girl can achieve academically.

Machungwa (1993) noted that discussions of factors leading to girls’ low completion in schools have concentrated on girls’ negative values and attitudes towards education, poverty, unfair division of labour in the home, pregnancy, early marriage, low parents’ and teachers’ expectations. Valid as these issues may be, there could probably be subtle factors embedded in the minds of the pupils that researchers need to get at, hence the imperative of carefully listening to the feelings of girls themselves about school.

MoE (2001) found that parents who were not educated, or may not have gone far in their education, often did not see the need for formal education of their children, especially girls. In such families, education is not viewed as an investment in the girls’ future or in preparing them to develop appropriate skills and life styles necessary in life. They look at a girl as someone who will get married and start a family in years to come.

Furthermore, household chores are an impediment to a girl child’s education. Girls perform a large share of the household chores, including cooking, fetching water and firewood, looking after and caring for the young, the old and the sick. MoE (ibid) also
found that in many households, girls were socialised to be subordinate to boys with regard to roles and responsibilities. Boys spend more time on leisure and recreation while girls spend relatively more time on such daily responsibilities.

Duncan (1996:46) aptly argues that for the girl child, the socialisation process transmits from an early age values and attitudes that cast women and girls in a secondary, subordinate role and that define them principally in terms of their roles as child-bearers and child-rearers. As in many other countries, tasks of fetching water and fire wood continue to take up much of the productive time of most girls in Zambia, especially in rural areas.

MoE (2000) found that teachers’ attitudes towards girls also affected their completion rate. A negative expectation on the part of the teacher, or other negative signals indicating discrimination in the treatment of girls, had a powerful effect on the girls’ learning. Some teachers come with pre-conceived ideas that girls are not capable of doing well in some subjects, especially the science related ones.

Du Plessis (2002), also found that teacher expectation and teacher-pupil interaction were among the major factors contributing to girls’ low completion rate in schools. Teachers tended to interact more with boys, gave them more time to answer questions and gave more positive feedback to boys than to girls. This sends a powerful message about who succeeds and who fails in the learning environment, and it is always the girl child who does not succeed.

From the foregoing literature, it is evident that girls’ low basic education completion rate are not only affected by home background factors but also by the school-based factors. Evidence obtained by many researchers point to the fact that schools also play a major role in girls’ low completion rate. Even those girls who are predisposed by either social or psychological factors to be forced out of school, are very much affected by what happens in school. The studies reviewed above have shown that poor physical layout of a school and other infrastructure, lead to girls’ low completion rate of basic education.
Although the implementation of the re-entry policy has started showing positive things there are still challenges that are experienced and affect the extent to which girls are taking advantage of this opportunity to go back to school. Mwansa (2008) note that in recent years, organisations such as FAWEZA have acknowledged the limitations of the policy as it is now structured and have advanced some possible explanations for its failures. Among these is the existence in frequent cases, of a hostile school environment. Many schools were perceived as being un receptive to having teenage mothers back in school. The MoE (2006 and 2007) point to the existence of stigmatization of pupils who are mothers, lack of support from both teachers and parents and a sense of shame and lost status among the girls themselves as factors hindering teenage mothers from returning to school (MoE 2006, MoE, 2007, Mwansa, 2008, Luangala, 2008, Kasonde-Ng'andu et al. 1999).

Generally, provision and access to education has been found to favour boys than girls due to socio-economic, cultural and other factors. Various studies have also shown that direct costs of education prevent girls from attending school. When household funds became scarce, money for girls’ education was often sacrificed ahead of other expenses (Kainja and Mkandawire, 1990 in Wolf and Kainja, 1999).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction
Chapter three discusses the methodology employed in this study. It includes the research design, target population, the characteristics of the sample, and instruments of data collection as well as data analysis.

Research design
A survey approach was used in conducting this research. A survey usually involves collecting data by interviewing a sample of people selected to accurately represent the population under study (Sidhu, 2006). Survey questions concern people’s behaviour, their attitudes, how and where they live, and information about their backgrounds. The study opted to use this method taking into account the complexity of the research at hand.

This study used mainly qualitative methods of data collection. The study was highly descriptive in nature. Quantitative methods of data collection were, however, also employed to yield empirical data to substantiate the qualitative data.

Target Population
The target population comprised all the head teachers, teachers, pupils in grades eight and nine and parents of pupils in all the seven basic schools under study in Chongwe District.

Sample size
The sample comprised 60 teachers, 42 pupils, 30 parents and seven (7) head teachers drawn from seven (7) government basic schools in Chongwe District.

Sampling procedure
The seven schools that formed the sample of the study were selected on the basis of being the most affected in terms of low completion rate among girls, based on
information obtained from the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) for Chongwe District. The teachers were selected using a non-probability sampling procedure. The head teacher helped the researcher by randomly selecting the teachers who could possibly help with the information needed for the research. The same procedure was applied in all the schools that took part in the study. The girls were randomly picked from grades 8 and 9 classes for focused group discussions. The parents were picked on the basis of easy reach. This was because it was extremely difficult at times to get them as most of them were out in the fields working. Therefore the researcher found this method to be the most convenient one. The seven head teachers were picked because of their positions in the schools.

**Data collection instruments**

In collecting data for this research, the following instruments were used: structured questionnaires, semi-structured interview schedules and focus group discussion guides. Bell (1993), states that questionnaires and interviews are a good way of collecting information quickly and are relatively cheaper.

Other strengths of the questionnaire are that, it secures standardized results that can be tabulated and treated statistically. It can be mailed when the field of research is vast and the respondents are scattered over a very large area. A large sample may also be drawn and all groups of people can easily be covered and contacted. The method places less pressure on the subject for immediate response and gives more time to the respondents to answer questions. Information obtained through this study is more valid and reliable.

Interviews are flexible and applicable to different types of problems in that the interviewer may change mode of questioning if the occasion demands. Unclear responses from the respondents can be clarified by rephrasing the questions. Interviews, especially the semi-structured ones, give the respondent the opportunity to ask the interviewer to explain or clarify certain things where he or she is not sure. In interviews, the interviewer has the opportunity to engage more closely with the respondents and can therefore play a role in fostering an environment which is more
conducive to open a frank discussion. In this study, questionnaires were used to collect data.

**Data collection procedure**
The data were collected between 19th and 30th May in the second term of the school calendar for 2008.

Structured questionnaires were used to obtain information from the teachers and head teachers with the aim of obtaining in-depth information about the impact of teacher’s attitudes in relation to girls’ completion rate in basic schools of Chongwe District.

Semi-structured interview schedules were used to gather information from the head teachers on causes of girls’ low completion rate in Chongwe District schools. The idea was to get the head teachers’ perspectives. Unstructured interviews were also conducted with the parents in order to obtain their views on the causes of low completion rate of girls’ in basic schools in Chongwe District. Focus group discussions were conducted with grades 8 and 9 to obtain in-depth information on their experiences in school.

School records such as registers were scrutinised to get data on girls’ low completion rate in the schools. This made it possible to counter-check information provided by the respondents on the same.

**Data analysis**
Data was largely analysed qualitatively. Data obtained through interviews and focus group discussions was analysed by coding and grouping the emerging themes. Some qualitative data was converted manually and summarized in order to obtain concise measures of the data by using descriptive statistics. The data was then presented quantitatively as percentages and in frequency tables using a hand calculator.

**Limitations of the study**
Time and financial resources were the two major limiting factors in this study. There was extreme pressure to conduct the study as quickly as possible to meet the
stipulated deadlines for the completion of the whole programme. Because of financial constraints, the study was conducted at only seven basic schools out of many schools in Chongwe District. Also equipment for audio-visual recording could not be purchased and used in recording the interviewees’ verbal expressions during the focus group discussions and the unstructured interviews. However, tape recording of focus group discussions and each individual interview was done. It is hoped that the findings of the study will represent all schools throughout the district.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter presents the findings of the study which aimed at investigating the factors leading to low completion rate among girls at basic school level in Chongwe District. The findings are presented according to the emerging issues from the field, starting with the responses from the teachers followed by those from the head teachers, then those from the pupils, parents and finally those from class registers.

Attitudes of girls towards school
One of the objectives of the study was to investigate if the attitudes of girls towards school lead to their low completion of basic education. In addressing this objective, information was collected from teachers, parents and girls on attitudes towards school.

Teachers were asked to indicate the girls’ attitude towards school. Table 1 below shows their responses. The table shows that most of them, 31 (50.8%) said girls had a very bad attitude while four (4), (6.6%) said that girls had very good attitude.

Table 1: Attitudes of girls towards school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the girls’ attitude towards school?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were further asked to indicate whether age at which girls started school contributed to the low completion of basic education. Their responses are summarised
in Table 2 below. The table shows that most of them (42) saw age at which girl pupils start school as a contributing factor, while 19 said it was not a factor.

### Table 2: Girls’ age as a contributing factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does girls’ age contribute to low completion rate?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the attitudes of girls towards school, the study also looked at the behaviour of girls towards boys. Table 3 below shows the responses from the teachers. The table shows that more than half of the respondents (47) said it was very poor, while eight (8) said it was poor. The rest of the respondents said it was good and very good respectively, representing three (3) respondents each.

### Table 3: Girls’ behaviour towards boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is the behaviour of girls towards boys?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked to indicate as to whether their attitudes towards girls do contribute to girls’ low completion rate. Their responses are as shown in Table 4 below. More than half of them (44), indicated that their attitude towards girls does not have a bearing on girls’ low completion rate, while 17 of them said that it did contribute to low completion rate among girls.
Table 4: Whether teacher attitude contribute to girls low basic school completion rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does attitude of teachers contribute to girls’ low completion rate?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from girls during focused discussions on attitudes towards school revealed that there was total agreement among all the 42 girls (six from each school) that most girls in rural areas had a negative attitude towards school work because of laziness. They felt that school was meant for boys who would hold good positions in society in future. One girl at one school said the following:

“We sometimes feel that we are not as intelligent as boys. This makes us lazy and so we are not bothered even if we did not go to school”

Most of the girls said that they lacked confidence and that was the reason why they did not finish school. They explained that this came about when teachers did not acknowledge them in class, although some teachers tried to do that. One girl said:

“Even if I knew the answer, I would not put my hand up because of fear to be laughed at”. Another one said: “I feel shy when the teacher tells me I was wrong because I am in the same class with my boyfriend”.

Peer pressure was noted to be a factor in five schools where most of the girls preferred doing all sorts of things to going to school. Discussions with 30 girls revealed that it was peer-pressure which drove them into smoking, drinking beer, engaging in sexual
relationships with boys, teachers and other elderly men in the community so that they could obtain money to enable them buy whatever they wanted, especially, cosmetics, tight jeans and cell phones. Lack of entertainment facilities at school was cited to be one of the causes of this unwanted behaviour. The other two schools also cited peer pressure as a contributing factor to low completion rate of basic education among girls in Chongwe District though it was minimal.

Almost all the girls (27 out of 30) that the researcher discussed with from all the seven schools pointed out that early marriage was a factor that contributed to girls’ low completion of basic education. They preferred getting married to going to school. Some twelve (12) girls from two schools said:

“Our parents forced us into early marriage because they did not have money to send us to school”.

Upon hearing this, the researcher asked the girls as to whether they were aware of the fact that education was free at basic school level. The girls responded:

“We are aware but still need pocket money, money for books, pens, shoes and other items”.

The researcher however discovered that although some parents had money to send their girls to school, some of the girls were simply not interested and were ready to marry.

Interviews with parents in all the communities the researcher visited also revealed that girls were very lazy in school work. They thought school was for boys and their place was in the kitchen. Parents felt that girls were lazy because they did not have confidence in themselves. Lack of confidence among girls was intense when they learnt side by side with boys. Girls felt that they would be laughed at if they failed to give correct answers to asked questions.
Data from class registers in all the seven schools visited indicated that there were some similarities about girls’ absenteeism. The registers showed a lot of ‘x’ (meaning absent from school) beside girls’ names. When teachers were asked what this meant, they explained that girls sometimes did not feel like coming to school. They did not show interest in school. They further explained that this was common in rural areas where girls attended school when they felt like. Moreover, they explained that even when girls did not attend school for more than two weeks, they were not disciplined.

The effects of the school environment on completion rate of basic education among girls
The second objective of the study was to determine if the school environment lead to the low completion of basic education among girls. Information was collected from teachers, parents and girls.

Teacher respondents were asked to indicate as to whether the school administration had a bearing on girls’ low completion of basic education. Table 5 below summarises their responses. The table shows that 45 of them said “not in any way” while 14 of them indicated that school administration does have a bearing on girls’ completion rate, especially when there is frequent changes in administration.

Table 5: Whether administration have a bearing on girls low completion rate of basic education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does school administration have a bearing on girls' low completion rate?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not in any way</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there is frequent changes in administration</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers were also asked to indicate as to whether physical facilities in the school were a contributing factor to low completion rate among girls. Their responses are shown in Table 6. The table shows that most of them (27) said that physical facilities were a contributing factor to girls’ low completion rate especially if the toilets were not enough. Some of the teachers (18) said physical facilities had a bearing especially where classrooms were not enough. The rest (16) respondents said physical facilities were a factor when the school had no special rooms for Home Economics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do physical facilities contribute to girls’ low completion of basic education?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If the toilets are not enough</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If classrooms are not enough</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there are no special rooms like Home Economics</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers in schools were asked to indicate as to whether lack of role models contributed to low completion rate among girls in schools. Table 7 shows the responses to this issue. The table shows that 47 of them indicated that lack of female role model contributed to girls’ low completion of basic education while 13 of them said that lack of role models was not a contributing factor.

Parents who were interviewed explained that there was no proper teaching of Home Economics in rural areas because there were no appropriate rooms and equipment for teaching the subject. In Home Economics girls were attracted because they could sew, cook and do some Knitting. They said that the theory that they did in Home Economics was not enough. They needed to do practicals as well. Parents said that if girls were sewing, cooking and knitting in the schools, they would be encouraged to stay on in school.

25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does lack of role model contribute to low completion rate?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the parents also expressed disappointment at the Ministry of Education for not sending female teachers to rural areas. They said that more teachers should be sent to rural areas so that girls could be encouraged. They explained that female teachers would be able to talk to girls and counsel them. These teachers would tell them that there is no difference between a boy and a girl and that they are both equal and important in the community.

The girls also complained about not having enough teachers in their schools, especially female teachers who would be their role models. At one school, the girls said:

“Having about five to six female teachers in school was not good enough. We want our schools to have more female teachers whom we can emulate”.

Teachers were also asked to indicate how they related to the pupils in the school. Their views were as presented in Table 8 below. The table shows that teachers at all the seven (7) schools indicated that the relationship between teachers and girls was “bad” or “very bad”. Very few indicated that the relationship was “good” or “very good”. The implication of the above finding was that the relationship between the pupils and teachers was not cordial at all as indicated by most of the respondents (36).
Table 8: Relationship between teachers and girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is the relationship between teachers and girls?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the question on whether the methods and materials the teachers were using in teaching the girls contributed to low completion rate for girls, the majority of the teachers (45) said “not at all”. Very few indicated “sometimes” and “very rare”, representing seven and nine respondents, respectively. Table 9 below shows the responses from the teachers.

Table 9: Methods and materials used by teachers in teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you say that methods and materials teachers use has an influence on girls’ low completion of basic education.</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very rare</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effects of home environment on completion of basic education

The third objective of the study was to examine if the home environment contributed to low completion rate of basic education among girls in some selected schools in Chongwe District.

When teachers were asked as to whether distance to school led to low completion of basic education among girls, the following data emerged as shown in Table 10 below.
The table shows that nearly all the teachers asked at the seven (7) schools admitted that distance does contribute to girls low completion of basic education. Only seven (7) of them, however, said it does not contribute to low completion rate. Among the reasons advanced by these teachers was that some of the schools were within reach, that is, in the same communities that the pupils lived. They also indicated that there was also a possibility of pupils just being lazy.

**Table 10: Teacher’s views on distance to school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does distance contribute to girls’ low completion of basic education?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opinion of girls on the effects of distance on their completion of basic education was that walking long distances to school had an impact on their school attendance. Most of them lived some eight or nine kilometres away from their schools. They complained of reaching school very tired and because of this they did not pay much attention in class. This made them perform very badly in class, and because of the bad performance in class, they got discouraged and chose not to continue with school.

Another factor that was investigated in relation to the third objective was whether or not parents’ educational levels contributed to low completion rate of basic education among girls. Teachers were asked to indicate as to whether the educational level of parents contributed to low completion rate of basic education among the girls. Table 11 below shows their responses. The table shows that majority of them (54) said “yes” while seven (7) of them said “no”. For the respondents who answered negatively, the reasons they gave were that despite some families spending much of their resources to educate the girl child, most of the girls were reluctant to go to school saying education was for the boys and instead stayed home to do other household chores.
Table 11: Whether parent’s educational level contributed to low completion rate of girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the educational level of parents contribute to low completion rate of girls?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were further asked to indicate whether traditional practices contributed to low completion rate among girls and if so to list those traditional practices that they thought contributed to low completion rate of girls. Table 12 below shows that most of them were of the view that traditional practices do not contribute to low completion rate of basic education among girls. However, 7 of them said it does contribute while 5 of them said it sometimes contributes to low completion rate of basic education among girls.

Table 12: Whether traditional practices contribute to low completion of basic education of girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the teachers who said “yes”, a further question was asked to them to indicate the traditional practices they perceived as contributing to low completion rate of basic education among the girls. Among the most pronounced traditional practices were initiation ceremonies such as “mooye” or “ichisungu” or “mwananjo”.

29
On the issue of sanitary towels, 30 girls in five schools who participated in the focus group discussions pointed out that lack of sanitary towels contributed to girls’ low completion rate. The girls complained thus:

“We have a very big problem in terms of sanitary towels. The small shops that we have around here do not stock these. We are forced to use clothes which are not comfortable at all”. One girl went on to say:

“Like us who walk long distances to school, it is worse. That’s why we stay away from school when this time comes. Imagine how you would feel with the cloth on you”. “It is very uncomfortable”.

However, one of the girls in an focus group discussion at one of the two schools said:

“We sometimes buy such items from the small shops near the school. The only problem is that the items are not readily available. Yes, at times we go to an extent of using clothes even if they are not comfortable. What do you do in such a situation? You just have to use it”.

In order to get more information on why there was low completion rate for girls in schools, especially in their communities, parents from communities near the schools were also interviewed. Some of the views given were as follows:

Re-entry policy
There was 100% agreement among parents that the re-entry policy which was introduced by the government contributed to the girls’ low completion rate. They explained that this policy of re-entry encouraged girls to indulge themselves in sexual activity with boys or men. When asked what they meant, they responded:

"Bana batukashi balicishi cino cindi kwmbai na bapula lifumo bali kute nkusu sha ku bolelamo ku cikolo. Ca bipapo
ncakwambia na ba bolela ku cikolo, balubako baboleshapo, alimwi ba pula lifumo”. (This was because they knew that even if they became pregnant they would still go back to school after giving birth. But once they went back to school, they did not mind at all and became pregnant again).

**Human rights**

The other reason parents gave was human rights. Parents were failing to control their girls because of human rights. When parents punished the girls or shouted at them in the process of correcting their mistakes, they retaliated and acted disrespectfully. They told their parents that they would report them to the Victims Support Unit. Parents therefore feared to discipline their children. As a result some girls misbehaved a lot and did all sorts of things like drinking beer and coming home late. This worried the majority of the parents in the communities and complained very much about this situation.

**The effects of low completion rate of basic education on schools**

Teachers in schools under study were asked to indicate some of the effects of low completion rate among girls on the school. Table 13 below shows their responses. Most of them (44) indicated that the girls that remained in school did not see the value of education, while ten (10) of them said the school loses reputation.

**Table 13: The effects of low completion rate among girls on the school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School loses reputation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls who remain do not see the value of education</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is imbalance in the number of girls and boys in school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers were asked to indicate what they thought would be effects of low completion rate of girls on the community. Table 14 below shows their responses. The table shows that most of them (32) said there would be poor community development followed, by 18 respondents who said the number of female illiterate in the community would increase.

**Table 14: The effects of low completion rate among girls on the community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increases the number of illiterate females in the community</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor community development as most women cannot participate in community projects due to lack of education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty levels increases with a lot of children outside wedlock; spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime increase as many children cannot go to school since their parents do not value education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As regards the best ways of ensuring that girls remained in school, most teachers (12) said the re-entry policy should be revised because the same girls end up being pregnant again and do not finish school while eleven (11) of them said government should introduce free boarding schools for girls. Three (3) of them said schools should provide an environment which is friendly to the girl child (toilets, sanitary towels and enough water), and three (3) other teachers said that the government should employ more female teachers in rural areas to serve as role models to the girls. Other responses were: the national constitution should prohibit girls entering into marriage before the age of 21 years; lock up for two years parents who may marry off their daughters at an early age; make girls start school at an early age; tell girls that they are as important as boys and they should finish school and not to engage themselves in sex before marriage; village headmen should sensitize their communities on the
importance of educating the girl child; encourage girls to go back to schools after giving birth as some do not go back; open ‘mothers’ only schools so that those who are ‘mothers’ can learn freely; and provide schools within their reach.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter discusses the findings of the study which sought to investigate the factors leading to girls' low completion rate of basic education in selected basic schools in Chongwe District. The findings are discussed according to the objectives of the study. The following were the objectives of the study: to investigate if the attitudes of girls towards school leads to girls' low completion rate of basic education among girls in selected basic schools; to determine if school environment leads to low completion rate of basic education among girls; and to establish if the home environment of girls leads to their low completion rate of basic education in Chongwe District.

The study revealed that there was girls' low completion of basic education in some schools in Chongwe District. This was evidenced by the fact that not all girls that were enrolled in Grade 1 completed the basic school cycle. The number of girls decreased steadily with noticeably high female drop-out from Grade 4 onwards. The differences in enrolment became even more evident particularly from Grade 5.

The study revealed that girls' attitude towards school was among the main factors contributing to low completion rate of basic education among girls. The study showed that 77% of the girls had a negative attitude towards school. One of the factors acknowledged by the study that led girls to develop negative attitudes towards school was lack of cordial pupil-teacher relationships which accounted for 36% of the total respondents. This resulted in girls alienating themselves from their teachers and school, and more specifically from classroom-based learning activities.

The findings of the study also showed that failure by teachers to be close to girls, attend to girls' personal problems, lack of communication with girls and unfair treatment of girls by teachers were among the reasons for girls' low completion rate in schools. Teachers spent very little time with the girls and there was inadequate
communication between girls and their teachers. This finding is in agreement with Rita (2003) who stated that poor performance in many subjects, especially Mathematics and Science subjects, could be attributed to inadequate communication and attention given to the girls by teachers.

There was overwhelming evidence from both teachers and girls that because of the poor attitude that girls developed towards school, they did not mind going to school at all. Most girls in rural areas feel school is meant for boys as they are the ones who would hold important positions in society in future. Findings from focus group discussions also revealed that the girls felt that they were not as intelligent as the boys. This attitude of mind made the girls pay very little attention to education. Parents also disclosed that girls did not mind school at all because of the belief that their place was in the kitchen. They also reported that other parents look at girls as people who will get married and start a family as soon as they have attained maturity.

Another factor which was found to be contributing to girls' low completion of basic education among girls was the age at which girls started school as evidenced by the findings of the study in which 68% of the teachers agreed to the statement that required them to indicate whether age was a contributing factor to low completion of basic education among the girls. It was found out that many girls started school very late. By the time they reached grades 5 and 6 they would have become adults and would have had sexual intercourse already so that it became very difficult for teachers and parents to control them. Both teachers and parents urged the teachers who were in charge of enrolling pupils in grade one to consider enrolling girls who were at the age of 5 and not as old as 7 years as per government directive. “Girls these days mature fast and become of age as early as 9 and 10 years”, was the argument. This argument is faulty because it goes against the Education For All (EFA) goals to the effect that by 2015 every child who is supposed to be in school should indeed be in school. The findings from the schools under study, therefore, confirmed that girls who start school very late do not finish school as they pick undesirable habits such as sexual immorality.
The other factor identified that contributed to girls’ low completion of basic education in schools understudy was the physical facilities. In most of the schools visited, facilities such as good toilets, water and sanitary towels are lacking or are completely not available in schools. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Ministry of Education (2005) which reported that physical facilities like toilets and classrooms contributed to low completion of basic education among girls. Improper teaching of Home Economics also contributed to low completion of basic education among girls in Chongwe district. Some teachers expressed concern that Home Economics, which was supposed to be liked by girls was dying slowly in rural areas due to lack of infrastructure. Teachers who were supposed to teach this subject taught only theory and not practicals. This was because there were no specific rooms for Home Economics. One girl complained, saying, “ever since I came to this school, I have never seen a classroom for Home Economics. We learn this subject in this same classroom when boys go to work out in the garden. I have never seen what a colander or lemon squeezer looks like”. There is need therefore to improve teaching and to provide learning materials in schools for the pupils to appreciate the subject of Home Economics. Du Plessis (2002) points out that children learn more effectively by doing. This indeed is a truism in education.

It was also found that the behaviour of girls towards boys was another factor which contributed to girls’ low completion of basic education in schools. The behaviour of girls towards boys left much to be desired as evidenced by findings of the study in which 47% of the teachers indicated that the behaviour of girls was unbecoming because of their sexual relationships (that they had) with boys. This was also confirmed by parents who reported that relationships which existed between boys and girls in some schools were unhealthy. Parents blamed teachers for this behaviour because teachers seemed not to pay attention to the welfare of the girls. It evident from the discussions with teachers that they did not understand and show concern to what was happening to girls. There is an attitude towards them, which probably affects their performance. A negative expectation on the part of the teacher, or other negative signals from the teacher indicating discrimination in the treatment of girls, have a powerful effect on
girls’ learning (MoE 2000). One of the signals is that one which was encountered in this study, namely, stereotyping rural girls as generally lazy and not interested in education.

Du Plessis (2002) also found that teacher expectation and teacher-pupil interaction were among the major factors contributing to girls’ low completion rate in school. Teachers tend to interact more and freely with boys, and give them more positive feedback than girls. Be that as it may, Du Plessis misses the point that male teachers’ expression of care for the girl learner can be misconstrued by onlookers – female teachers and managers of the school to mean sexual advances. Incidents of male predators sexually molesting young girls exaggerate the perception.

The parents'/guardians’ educational levels were also found to be a contributing factor to girls’ low completion of basic education in schools as indicated by 86% of the teachers in the study. Most parents of the girls that this researcher visited were poor and they did not seem to pay a great deal of attention to the education of their children, especially girls. This finding is in conformity with MoE (2001) who found that parents who are not educated, or may not have gone far in their education, often do not see the need for formal education of their children, especially girls. In such families, education is not viewed as an investment in the girls’ future or in preparing them to develop appropriate life skills.

Lack of sanitary towels in rural areas was one of the factors found to be contributing to girls’ low completion of basic education. The findings of the study show that the small shops that are found in rural areas called “Tuntemba” do not supply the sanitary towels. They are out of stock most of the times. Lack of sanitary towels forces the girls to use pieces of cloth which make them uncomfortable, especially girls who walk many kilometres to and from school. It was found that girls did not attend school when they were menstruating. Cumulatively this absenteeism will lead to stopping school altogether.

Another factor that contributed to girls’ low completion rate of basic education in schools visited by the researcher was peer-pressure. This was found almost in every
school visited. Girls aged above 10 years indulged in beer drinking, smoking and sexual relationships. It was discovered that girls resorted to doing all these things in order to obtain money to buy things they admired from friends. The things that girls liked to buy most were powder, lipstick, perfume, nail polish, and lotion. Other things included cell phones and tight pair of jean trousers. The researcher found that all these things were done by the girls because there were no recreation facilities in schools and communities around the schools. Entertainment and sports keep young people busy and therefore, helps in stopping some of the undesirable behaviours that would come as a result of peer pressure. Girls were bored of doing same things, as a result they started to lose interest in school, work and found the outside world to be more interesting and fulfilling. However, at two schools peer-pressure reported was not as high as it was in other schools. There were one or two cases in these schools but not very pronounced. This could be mainly because they were in the periphered areas of Chongwe.

The re-entry policy was also found to be one of the contributing factors to girls' low completion of basic education in schools visited by the researcher. This policy was introduced by the government in September 1997 in order to help the girl child finish school. The policy meant for girls who at one time fell pregnant but have the desire to go back to school so that their dreams are not shattered. This policy was found to be abused by the girls. They seemed to have been repeating the same mistake over and over and again, because they knew that no one had the right to chase them away from school. It was generally felt that as long as the government gave permission to girls to go on leave when they became pregnant and come back after some time, sexual misdemeanour would continue among the girls.

It was found that once some girls went back to school, they did not apply themselves to learning. They were always absent-minded, may be thinking about their children or thinking about what their friends were thinking about them as mothers whilst in school. Sometimes they did not mingle with friends; they were always isolated and some became unruly, stubborn to their teachers. As a result of this most of the parents talked to felt that the policy was not helpful to some girls.
Apart from the "re-entry" policy, it was found that the human rights education seemed to contribute to girls' low completion of basic education. While it was appreciated that children should have the right to their opinion, freedom of speech, it was established that children had gone in the wrong direction. Parents were failing to control some of their girls. Whenever they rebuked them harshly in order to control them they would retaliate and act disrespectfully. They would threaten to report their parents to the Victim Support Unit.

It was revealed that the school administration, the materials and methods used by the teachers and traditional practices did not contribute to low completion of basic education among girls in schools and communities studied. These findings are at variance with the views and findings of some researchers in the reviewed literature like Obi (2001) who indicated that traditional practices contribute to girls' low completion of basic education. Also the MoE (2005) indicated that traditional practices such as initiation ceremonies where girls are confined for three months when they are of age make them miss lessons at school, thereby adversely affecting their achievement. However, this is not the case any more in both cases cited above. The study showed that girls were not secluded or confined in one place any more. Both teachers and pupils confirmed this. Parents also said that girls were confined for only two to three days to be taught about hygiene and how to look after themselves.

As for the materials used by teachers, it was discovered that teachers use the materials and methods approved by the Curriculum Development Centre CDC. The school administration also did not discourage girls from schooling. This was confirmed by all the seven schools that were studied.

This researcher also was found out that low completion of basic education among girls affected basic schools and the communities in one way or the other. In basic schools, it was discovered that because of the few girls that were in schools, these girls were made to do all the activities that could have been done by many girls. There were very few girls who qualified to go to high schools and successfully completed their high
school education. Worthy noting was the fact that people around the community doubted the integrity of the teachers who were running the schools in which girls dropped out of schools to become house wives.

In an attempt to find out why the community would have such doubts, the researcher found that, it was difficult for these basic schools to produce good results as the bright girls were the ones who stopped school on the way. This was especially at two schools where teachers expressed concern about why the bright girls were mainly the ones affected. One respondent (a teacher) told the researcher that in 2007, about fifteen girls who were more intelligent than boys stopped school. It was also found that the low completion rate among girls had forced some of the school to be biased when enrolling grade ones; they were giving more places to boys than girls. In four schools it was found that they had more boys than girls in grade one. School administrators claimed that even if equal numbers were given to boys and girls, a number of girls would not go through all the grades; it was, therefore, better to give chance to boys as early as possible.

Girls’ low completion rate of basic education also affect the communities as reported by 52.5% of the teacher respondents who said there was no development in the community. It is well known that educating girls might provide enormous economic and social benefits. This is because their education is particularly associated with significant reduction in infant mortality and morbidity; there is an improvement in family nutrition and health; low fertility rate, and improved chances of children’s education in the family. Better educated girls marry later, delay the birth of their first child, have better spacing and always have fewer children. So having educated girls in the country will be an important factor contributing to national economic growth.

Apart from slowing down development in the communities, there is always an increase in the population of illiterate women who can not read and write, and development projects do not succeed as these women shun participating in them due to lack of adequate education. They remain poor for the rest of their lives. Because of poverty, girls rush into early marriages and as a result the communities will have very few or no
women leaders with basic education. This leaves men in charge of the communities. They dominate and control women because they have basic education, and they run the community according to what they want.

**Summary of the discussion of the findings**

This study has shown that both home environment and school environment are factors that contribute to girls’ low rate of completion of basic education. There is some evidence that girls’ low completion rate of basic education can be increased and fuelled by the school itself as an institution through what happens in the school. It appears that whatever problems girls may come with from home are reinforced and supported by the school through the attitudes of teachers towards girls. Peer pressure was another outstanding factor identified by the study that contributed to girls’ low completion of basic education in school. Strained relationships between girls and teachers also had a role to play in girls’ low completion rate of basic education. The findings of this study also suggested that girls’ late entry into school proved to be a contributing factor to girls’ low completion of basic education. Girls of nowadays mature very fast, hence the reason for them to be in school as early as possible.

The study also revealed that while schools accepted the re-entry policy to a certain extent, the majority of rural schools received it with mixed feelings. This is because girls are repeating the same mistake of getting pregnant now and then without completing school. Girls are abusing this policy as well as the Human Rights which make the girls somewhat rude. However, this argument should be problematised. To a large extent it is part of stereotyping of girls.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion
The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors leading to girls’ low completion rate of basic education in schools in Chongwe District. From the findings and discussion, it could be concluded that girls’ low completion of basic education was caused by factors such as girls’ attitude towards school, late age of entry in school, relationships with teachers, re-entry policy, human rights, parent’s educational levels, and lack of sanitary towels and inadequate teaching of Home Economics. Other factors include lack of recreation facilities, long distances between the home and school and peer-pressure.

There is always a danger of underestimating the power of the rural communities to change their own situation. Some form of conscientisation is all it could take to help communities help girls to remain in school and complete school. Traditional leaders can be the most effective mediators of the message of (Girl-Child education) and (no early marriage). Above all, rural communities have to be developed so as to attract small scale local business men and women who will supply things like sanitary towels to girls. Government plans to electrify rural areas must be implemented. This will not only attract business men and women but also female teachers to rural areas. While this research focused on girls, it is only fair to point out that boys too have to be encouraged to stay in school and go all the way in their schooling. The point is that the boys who drop out of school and loiter around villages, engaging in manual work around farms are an incentive at least partly, to girls’ dropping out of school to get married to these boys.

However, it is important to point out that a lot has gone into improving the girl-child education but a lot more still needs to be done. Unless the grassroots’ is involved including the traditional leaders, nothing will be achieved.
Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions discussed. The following recommendations are made:

1. More schools should be built in rural areas in order to reduce the distances that girls cover to reach their schools, and enrolment age for girls should be at 5 years.

2. The Re-entry policy should be revisited as some girls repeat the same mistake and do not finish school.

3. To have effective schools, government, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders should institute economic empowerment measures in communities in order to mitigate the effects of impoverished home environment of girls.

4. Schools and communities should have recreational facilities. These can offer opportunities to girls to spend their leisure time constructively.

5. Headmen, Chiefs, Councillors and Members of Parliament must help the MoE to sensitize girls to value education more than early marriage.

6. Female teachers should be sent to rural areas and be promoted to administrative positions so that they can serve as role models for girls.

7. Government or non-governmental organisations should help in the improvement of the provision of social services such as housing for teachers, primary health care units, and sanitation.

8. The MoE should provide the necessary facilities and strengthen the teaching of Home Economics in rural schools.

9. In home environment where boys and girls are growing together, parents/guardians should desist from giving girls messages that condition them to believe that they are only supposed to be in the kitchen.
REFERENCES


*The Post*, Monday March 17, 2007

*The Post*, Tuesday April 8, 2008

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION
This research intends to determine the factors affecting girls’ low completion rate in schools. As a teacher, you have been purposively selected as a participant in this questionnaire; your participation is deeply appreciated. Please respond by marking ‘X’ in the appropriate spaces (s) and by writing the response (s) in the spaces provided where applicable.
Information obtained from the questionnaire shall be treated with high confidentiality and used for the educational research purposes only. Please answer each question as frankly and truthfully as possible.

Do **NOT** write your name.

1. Sex of respondent:  (a) Female  (b) Male
2. Marital status:  (a) Single  (b) Married
3. What is your age range?
   (a) 20 – 25
   (b) 25 – 30
   (c) 35 – 40

47
(d) 40+

4. Mark the following qualifications you have obtained.

(a) Educator's certificate
(b) Educator's diploma
(c) B A ED

PART II

5. What is the girls' attitude towards school?

(a) Very bad
(b) Bad
(c) Good
(d) Very good

6. Does the age at which girls start school contribute to low completion rate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

7. a. Do attitudes of teachers contribute to low completion rate?

(a) Yes (b) No

b. Please explain
8. Do the physical facilities in the school contribute to low completion rate among girls?

(a) Yes  [ ]  (b) No  [ ]

Please explain

9. Does the school administration affect the completion rate among girls? (Please explain).


10. Does the distance to school contribute to the low completion rate among girls? (Please explain).


11. What is the behaviour between boys and girls like?

(a) Very poor  [ ]

(b) Poor  [ ]

(c) Good  [ ]

(d) Very good  [ ]

(e) Excellent  [ ]
12. Does lack of role models affect the rate of completion among girls? (Please explain).

13. Do the materials and method used by teachers affect completion rate among girls? (Please explain).

14. How is the relationship between you teachers and the girls?
   
   (a) Very good [ ]
   
   (b) Good [ ]
   
   (c) Very bad [ ]
   
   (d) Bad [ ]

15. Does the educational levels of parents contribute to low completion rate of girls? (Please explain).

16. Do traditional practices in the area contribute to low completion rate of girls?
   
   (a) Yes [ ]
   (b) No [ ]

   If yes which ones?
17. Does the economic status of parents contribute to low completion rate among girls? (Please explain).

18. Do parents value the education of girls as that of boys?

(a) Yes □ (b) No □

If yes explain ____________________________________________

19. How has the low completion rate among girls affect

(a) the school?

........................................................................

(b) the community

........................................................................

20. Do you think girls have health problems in their homes to hinder their education?

(a) Yes □ (b) No □

If yes what are those health problems?

........................................................................
21. In your own view what would be the best way of ensuring girls to remain in school?


Thank you for your co-operation.
APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE HEADTEACHERS

1. Sex of the respondent  (a) Female  (b) Male  

2. Marital status:  (a) Single  (b) Married  

3. Age:__________________________

4. Name of the school________________________________________

5. Year established________________________________________

6. How long have you been at this school?________________________

PART II

7. How have you found the girls attitude towards education at this school?

________________________________________

8. Has age been the contributing factor for girl’s low completion rate?

________________________________________

9. Do you think attitudes of teachers can be the contributing factor to girls’ low completion rate?

(a) Yes  (b) No  

If yes, explain________________________________________

________________________________________
10. Do physical facilities at this school affect girls' low completion rate?

(a) Yes [ ] (b) No [ ]

If yes, how? ____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

11. What are parent’s attitudes towards girls’ education at this school?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

12. Does the school administration affect the completion rate among girls? (please explain).
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

13. Does lack of role model affect the rate of completion among girls? (please explain).
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

14. Does the distance to school contribute to low completion rate among girls? (please explain).
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

15. How do parents value education of girls as that of boys?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
16. How has the low completion rate among girls affected

(a) the school?


(b) the community?


17. Do girls face health problems in their homes?

(a) Yes □ (b) No □

If yes, what kind health problems?


18. In your own view what would be the best way of ensuring girls to remain in school?


Thank you for your co-operation.
APPENDIX III

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

1. Do your girls like going to school?

2. Do you support them while they are at school?
   If not, why?

3. What traditional practice contributes to girls low completion rate?

4. Do you value the education of girls to that of boys?

5. Has the relationship between girls and the teachers do contribute to the girls’ low completion rate?

6. Do attitudes of teachers contribute to low completion rate among girls?

7. Does the distance to school contribute to low completion rate among girls?

8. Does the social interaction that exist among girls and boys contribute to low completion rate among girls?

9. How has the low completion rate among girls affected
   (a) The school?
   (b) The community?

10. In your own view what would be the best way of ensuring girls to remain in school?

   Thank you

The Head teacher,

LUNIMBA BAILC

Dear Sir,

REF: FIED WORK FOR M. ED STUDIES.

The bearer of this letter Ms Rose Mumba Mbolela computer number 526004372 is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

The student is taking a Masters Programme in Education. The Programme has field work component which she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to her by your office.

Yours Faithfully,

Joseph Msoni

ACTING DISTRICT EDUCATION STANDARDS OFFICER
FOR/DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD SECRETARY
30th January, 2008

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD WORK FOR M.ED STUDENTS

The bearer of this letter Mr./Ms. ROSE MUNGA MBOLELA, computer number 52600.4372, is a duly registered student at the University of Zambia, School of Education.

The student is taking a Masters Programme in Education. The Programme has a fieldwork component which he/she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to him/her.

Yours Faithfully

P. C. Manchishi (Dr.)
ASSISTANT DEAN (PG), SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

cc. Dean, Education
    Director, DRGS