SCHOOL-COMMUNITY INTERRELATIONS AND SCHOOL DROPOUTS: TOWARDS DEVELOPING SUITABLE EDUCATION PROCESSES FOR REMOTE AREAS CHILDREN

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Abstract

This study carried out an analysis of the interplay between children's life at school and in their community as an effort to identify factors responsible for school dropouts. The study was guided by the Socio Ecological Model and it took place in one remote area in Botswana which is plagued by high rates of students' dropouts from primary school. The findings identified a number of incompatibilities between the way the school operates and the community's socio-cultural practices and economic lifestyle. The findings also pointed to a lack of relationship between the school and the community leading to failure to meet each other's needs and consequently resulting in school dropouts. This study adds to the debate on standardized education processes and argues that school dropouts in non-mainstream settings can be curbed through adapting education practices to the needs of the local communities and empowering them to actively participate in school related issues.

Keywords: school dropout; remote areas; Socio-Ecological Model; Botswana; community; school; non-mainstream; standardized education

1.0 Introduction

Research has shown that school dropout is a problem that is often prevalent among disadvantaged sections of societies (Birdsall, Levine and Ibrahim 2005; Hunt 2008; Ibrahim, Nakajjo and Isoke 2008; Sabates, Westbrook, Akyeampong and Hunt 2010). In Botswana, school dropout is prevalent in remote areas where children leave school in large numbers before attaining basic education, especially in the Western and North-Western parts of the country (Baputaki 2009; Letshabo, Mafela, Magogwe, Mazile, Molosiwa, Ramorogo, Tabulawa, and Tsayang 2002; Mokibelo 2014; Pansiri 2008; Polelo 2006). According to the 2014 school census, out of the 340,177 government primary schools' enrolments of 2013, a total of 2,218 students dropped out and from this number, about 50% of the students were from remote areas (Statistics Botswana 2016). Statistics from previous years show a similar situation (Statistics Botswana 2016), indicating that this pattern has been prevalent in the country over the years. This continued dropout from school by children in remote areas poses a problem for the government as it perpetuates poverty in these areas, thus further enhancing the developmental gap between urban and rural areas in the country. Various reports have indicated that Botswana is one of the countries in the world with high rates of inequality in terms of wealth distribution. This per capita income is highly correlated with levels of education as shown by various population census reports (Balise 2015).

To date, several initiatives have been put in place to address the problem of school dropout in remote areas of Botswana, most notably, the Remote Area Dwellers (RADs) project. This UNICEF project put in place different interventions to improve the learning environment for children in these areas to encourage them to stay in school, such as providing them with basic needs like food and

clothing (Chapman, Emert, and Coyne 2003). However, despite these efforts, the problem still persists, indicating that there is still a need to carry out more intensive research to help understand the intricacies of the phenomenon of education in such places and why it is not working out as hoped for. As an effort to gain this deeper understanding, this study adopted a contextual approach which analysed local socio-cultural and economic circumstances to find out how they impacted children's schooling. The aim of the study was to explore children's lives at school juxtapose their way of living at home and in their community to see if there were any factors that could be interfering with their schooling.

2.0 Literature

Several research studies have been carried out in Botswana to investigate the problem of school dropout in remote areas. The majority of these studies reported that the most common reason why children dropped out was due to lack of interest in school (Duncan 1995; Mandevu 2009; Mokibelo 2014; Polelo 2003). This lack of interest was reported to be bred by a variety of factors emanating from both within and outside the school. The predominant 'in-school factor' reported was the issue of language. Children from remote areas mostly belong to the minority sections of the population including Basarwa, Bayei and other minority groups, whose first language is neither the mainstream local language (Setswana), nor the official language (English), both of which are used as mediums of instruction at school. This right away, disadvantages these children at school because they struggle to understand what is being taught, which affect their academic performance, subsequently making them loose interest in school (Le Roux 1999; Mokibelo and Moumakwa 2006; Sekere 2011). In fact research indicates that some of the ethnic groups saw the superimposing of 'foreign languages' at school as a way to oppress them and erode their cultures, so they were resistant to this domination (Le Roux 1999; Pansiri 2011; Sekere 2011). Teachers' pedagogical limitations were also identified as reasons contributing to children's failure to achieve academically (Mokibelo and Moumakwa 2006; Pansiri 2008). Pansiri (2011), points out that teaching children in remote areas require special skills as the children need extra support to assist them understand concepts and most teachers were not well equipped to do so. Another reason advanced which contributed to children's lack of interest in school was that they did not see the value of education in their everyday lives, hence saw no reason for staying (Mandevu 2009; Pansiri 2008). Some studies have indicated that the school curriculum was insensitive to the cultures of the minority groups, with cultural representations and teaching styles fashioned after dominant cultures and marginalizing the local cultures, thus making the learning environment not conducive for remote area children to succeed (Molefe, Mokobane and Polelo 2001; Nyati-Ramahobo 2003; Sekere 2011). All these factors indicate that there are too many odds against the schooling of remote areas children which need to be addressed. The author Sekere (2011) identifies himself/herself as a remote area dweller and gives an insider's perspective that despite what most people believe, remote areas dwellers do care about education, it is just that the circumstances are unfavourable for them to attain it.

Global studies have also indicated that school dropout is influenced by various factors associated with the individual, family, culture and various other context specific circumstances (Hunt 2008). In Zambia, it is reported that the major reason why children in rural areas drop out of school is because of long distances that they have to travel to school which negatively impact both their academic and social wellbeing (Kambilima, 2014). Studies in South Africa have found that majority of girls from rural areas and informal settlements drop out due to pregnancy (De Wet & Mkwananzi, 2014; Grant & Hallman, 2008; Reddy, James, Sewpaul, Koopman, Funani, Sifunda & Omardien, 2010). Upon further investigation, research revealed that this pregnancy-related school dropout is due to issues such as household gender roles, cultural beliefs, violence, sexual harassment and inability to afford education

(Bledsoe, Casterline, Johnson-Kuhn, & Haaga, 1998; De Wet, 2007; Edmonds, 2004; Hunter & May, 2003; Mncube & Harber, 2012).

The family's economic status is believed to be one of the key predictors of dropout as children from poor families are reported to be more likely to quit school than those from well-off families, mainly due to costs (Brown and Park 2002; Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook and Hunt 2010). Bruneforth's 2006 study found that in Burkina Faso, Mali and Mozambique, more than 90% of children from the poorest families left primary school without completing it. Other studies like Singell (1972) described school dropout in terms of the Human Capital Theory and the concept of deferred gratification. Singell uses the economic interrelation of comparing current costs with anticipated future earnings from an investment to illustrate how people with high income and low income make a decision to either invest in education or not. The study concludes that the decision to drop out of school is mainly influenced by economic opportunities in which the poor do not foresee value for money in their investing in education. While Singell's study makes a sound argument in terms of the poor choosing not to invest in education because they do not expect much in return, this does not explain why children from poor households such as the ones found in remote areas of Botswana would still drop out of school even if there are no expenditures incurred in their schooling. This underpins the complexities of school dropout and the fact that there are many other variables at play causing this problem.

As research indicates, there is no universal way to solve the problem of school dropout because of the differences in the circumstances that cause it. Most research on school dropout has mainly been large scale studies aimed at identifying general reasons why students drop out in wide geographical areas (Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison 2006; Hunt 2008; Sara, Halland, Igel, and Alstrup,2015). Due to the magnitude of such studies, they often fall short in carrying out intensive explorations of the individual locations where dropouts occur to fully understand the intricacies and the relationship between factors that caused the state of affairs. To address this need, this study used the Socio Ecological Model (SEM) as a guiding framework to help understand the interactions between personal and environmental factors that influenced the children's behaviour towards school. This approach involved an analysis of the community's economic and socio-cultural lifestyle to understand how it impacts the children's schooling. This research was a preliminary study, the results of which are to be used to help design intervention strategies that could address the factors that lead to school dropout in the context under study. It is also hoped that schools in similar situations would benefit from the findings of the study.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, the theoretical framework that was used to guide this study was the SEM. The model is a theory-based framework that was first introduced in the 1970s by Urie Bronfenbrenner to help understand human development and was later revised in the 1980s (Kilanowski, 2017). The theory posits that individual characteristics and environmental factors shape people's cognitions and their dispositions regarding various issues. The intention of the framework is to assist in fully understanding the different factors that influence people to behave in certain ways in various contexts (Larios, Lozada, Strathdee, Semple, Roesch, Staines, Orozovich, Fraga, Amaro, Adela de la Torre, Magis-Rodríguez, and Patterson 2009). According to the model, many social, cultural and economic factors contribute to certain behaviours in humans. This ecological perspective calls for an analysis of the interplay between the environment and the people living in it to enable understanding of social determinants of behaviour. The framework is made up of five hierarchical levels, namely: individual, interpersonal, community, organization and policy (Gregson, Foerster, Orr, Jones, Benedict, Clarke, Hersey, Lewis, and Zot, 2001). According to the SEM, these levels are interrelated and their careful

exploration allows for a deeper understanding of the various factors that lead people to behave in certain ways. The appeal of this model rest on its premise that interventions should not only target the individual but should also consider the interpersonal, organizational and environmental factors influencing their behaviour (McKinlay 1995). School dropout is a very complex phenomenon as such this model provided a suitable framework to guide in addressing multiple issues that impact students' schooling.

4.0 Research Questions

The SEM was used to inform the designing of the research questions for this study to enable exploration of factors that have been identified as important to the issue of school dropout. As such, the research questions that guided this study were;

1. What are the characteristic of the children who drop out in the area under study?
2. How does the socio-cultural and economic lifestyle of people in this area under study affect the children's schooling?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between the different communities in the area which have stake in children's schooling?
4. How is the compatibility between the various structures that school-going children are subjected to?
5. How does policy affect children's schooling in the area under study?

5.0 Methodology

The setting

This research took place in one remote area in Botswana that has high dropout rates of students from primary school. The area is made up of one small village with a total population of about 1,500 people and associated small settlements scattered around the village making up a total population of about 600 people. The community belongs to the minority section of the society and their first language is different from the main stream population. The primary school in the area is located in the main village and has boarding facilities to accommodate children from the settlements. The classes ranged from standard one to seven and each level had two groups with an average class size of 35 students. The school had a total student population of 466 students and 18 teachers.

6.0 The participants

Participants in this study were various stakeholders in children's schooling and these included; teachers, students, parents and officials from the concerned ministries in students' schooling. Multiple sampling techniques were used to select these participants. For the students and teachers at school, stratified sampling was used to select one class per standard in order to get a representation of all levels in the study. Then random sampling was used to identify students for interviews. All teachers of the selected classes were requested to participate in the study. All the participating teachers were from outside the area under study and they belonged to mainstream ethnic groups in the country. The school administration which included the head teacher and the students' caretakers (Boarding Master and Matron) were also included in the study.

For the participants outside school, in this case, students who had dropped out and their parents, informant sampling was used to locate them. A local teacher who came from the community assisted to locate these children and their parents. The school provided a list of students who had dropped out of school in recent years and the researchers followed them to their homes. The list contained 29

students. Convenience sampling was employed to identify these participants. A representative from the Ministry of Education and Skills Development regional office under whose jurisdiction the school fell was requested to participate in the study. A representative from the social welfare program also participated in the study.

Table 1: *Participants who were interviewed*

Participants	Number
Teachers	7
Head teacher	1
Matron	1
Boarding master	1
Students in school	46
Students who dropped out	15
Parents of children who dropped out	13
Ministry of Education official	1
Social Worker	1
Total	86

7.0 Data collection instruments and procedures

Data was collected through interviews. The interviews in the study were conducted both in English and the local language depending on which language the interviewees were most comfortable with. There were both individual and group interviews. The 'in-school' students were interviewed in groups ranging from five to ten children. These interviews were videotaped and some only audio-taped. Interview questions were used as a guide aimed at addressing the research questions of the study.

8.0 Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the data obtained from the interviews. First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Then the data was coded through going over the material and identifying recurrent issues that could be regarded as the root of the problem. The material was coded, highlighting the keywords and phrases and placing them in the identified categories as per the research questions of the study.

9.0 Results

This study sought to identify contextual factors that impacted children's schooling in the area under study which eventually led to them dropping out of school. This section presents the findings of this study.

10.0 Characteristics of children who dropped out

At the individual level, the study found that more boys than girls dropped out of school. From the 29 names of dropped out students that the school had provided, 20 of them were boys, while nine were girls. From the 15 dropped out students whom the study managed to locate, 11 of them were boys and only four were girls. Dropouts were also reported to be higher among lower grade children (standard one to four) and according to the school authorities they believed that was mainly because these children were too young to be separated from their families. As shown by the following statements:

In our observation, these kids are home sick. They are separated from their mothers at a tender age of six years. Even you can miss your mother and your siblings.

These children come here at the beginning of the term and only go back home at the end of the term. Their parents also do not bother to come and see them.

The parents also indicated that they were not happy about having to part with their children at such a young age for them to go to boarding school and understood why the children would want to come back home, they said:

I worried about my child a lot, he is too young, and he does not know how to do a lot of things for himself.

I am not happy that this boy left school, I want him to get educated, but I also miss him when he is away and worry.

I do not know what can be done, but these children are too young to be living with people they do not know, they miss home.

Furthermore, discussions with students who had dropped out indicated that they did not have a positive attitude towards school. When asked what they thought about school, all participating dropped out students stated that they did not like it at school. Their colleagues who were in school also reported that they believed their peers left because they were not interested in what was happening in school but wanted do other things outside school such as herding cattle or working in the fields.

11.0 The socio-economic lifestyle of people in the area

This study found that people living in the community under study had very strong family and community bonds and did not easily relate with outsiders as demonstrated by the following quotes from the school-based participants:

The people in this community are very close and they only want to relate among themselves, it is very difficult to get through to them, it is like they do not trust outsiders.

The way these children are brought up, they don't just talk to anyone, they are not open, and it really affects them because it destroys their confidence.

The teachers in this study inferred that the children's unsocial behaviour had a negative impact on their learning because being in school required them to interact with other people outside their families and communities. It was reported that the majority of them did not cope well with this situation hence they ended up leaving school and going back home. When the dropped-out children were asked whether they were comfortable with talking to teachers and other people they said no and when asked why, majority of them said "because we don't know them." Parents also indicated that their children did not know those people (the school personnel) and were not comfortable to talk to them.

The study revealed that the community's economic lifestyle also affected children's schooling in this area. The study found that the major economic activities in the area were agriculture and hunting. It was reported that during the hunting season, families left their homes and moved into the forests to hunt wild animals. Children also joined in this activity, therefore, leaving school, as one participant said "seasons also play a big role, when winter approaches like now, they vanish into thin air and come back after winter." The hunting season was reported to last for about three months, which meant children missed a lot from school so they eventually dropped out. Also some families would come back to their homes after the hunting activities, but some would make new homes at a different location. This

nomadic living style greatly impacted children's learning. Furthermore, the study found that the majority of the families in the community received food baskets from the government.

12.0 The relationship between the different communities in the area

At the community level, the research found that in the area under study, the school was one institution that took the children away from the comfort of their homes into an unfamiliar environment in which most of them were struggling to cope. The school as an entity had its own way of operating and socializing children. However, the study identified a less than harmonious relationship between the school and the community. The teachers in the study indicated that the problem of school dropout was exacerbated by the fact that parents were not supportive of their children's schooling and some were said to be influencing the children negatively against school. One teacher said "at home, they influence children to have bad or negative attitudes towards us, coaching them to portray bad behaviour and take us for granted." The teachers in the study expressed a lot of frustration over the parents' lack of involvement in their children's learning. Parents were reported to not attend Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings and also did not take any action when their children came back from school to stay at home.

When asked what steps had they taken towards their children leaving school, parents gave varying reasons as shown below:

I have tried to ask this child to go back to school, but he is refusing, so what can I do?

I want him to go to school, but he just wants to stay home with me, which means he will be uneducated like me. There is nothing I can do.

When asked why they did not visit the school to check on their children's social and academic welfare, some parents said:

The school is too far. I have no transport. I have been planning to go, time has been a problem.

I am not educated myself, so how can I help a child?

13.0 The compatibility between the various structures that school-going children belonged to

This study found that one of the reasons why students dropped out of school was because of the incompatibilities between the students' lifestyle at their homes and the one they had to live at school. The majority of the school-based participants reported that the way the children were brought up at their homes in terms of behaviour and responsibility was in direct contrast to what was expected of them at school. The school-based participants indicated that at their homes, the children were not subjected to parental control in terms of monitoring their behaviour and teaching them responsibility as indicated by the excerpts below:

We often pay them visits at home and we find that the way they are raised, is like they grow up alone with no one to groom them like in school, here we expect them to follow rules and take responsibilities both academic and social.

At their homes, these children do as they wish, they are not used to being told what to do or to follow certain rules.

From what I have observed, these children are not taught any kind of responsibility at their homes such as doing chores, so when they get here and are required to do such things, it is really a problem for them and they end up not liking being in school.

According to the children who had dropped out, part of the reasons why they left school was because the people at school (teachers and caretakers at the hostels) were too strict, making it uncomfortable for them to stay, as shown by the following excerpts:

Those people at school are too strict, they want us to do things we are not used to doing and if you do not you are always in trouble.

I did not like staying at the hostels, you have to do a lot of things, like washing, sweeping. I do not do that at home.

When asked for their opinions on the expectation placed on children at school vis a vis what they do at home, the majority of the parents indicated that they agreed with their children that life at school was too hard for them as shown by the following conversation:

Interviewer: your child says she came back from school because life there was not nice, she had to do a lot of things that she was not used to doing, what do you say to that?

Parent: What can I say? She came back saying the people at school always wanted her to do this and that, things she did not like doing, so she was not happy.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to the school to find out what was going on as a way to help the child get back into school?

Parent: No.

Interviewer: Why?

Parent: If the child does not like it there, I cannot force her. I want her to be educated, but if they are not treating her nicely and she is not happy, there is nothing I can do.

Interviewer: what do you say to the beliefs that you do not teach your children to follow rules and take responsibility, which is why they struggle to stay at school since that is what is expected of them there?

Parent: I cannot say we do not teach our children rules, because we do. We teach them our rules and our way of living. Maybe it is not what the school is teaching, but we teach our children what they need to know according to our livelihood.

Some of the dropped out children also reported that the reason they left school was because the teachers administered corporal punishment on them and they could not withstand the practice, hence they left. The children indicated that they were not used to such form of punishment. The parents in the study also registered that they were not comfortable with their children being physically punished because that was contrary to how they raised their children. One parent said: "they beat our children at school and I do not like it because I have never beaten my child myself, that is not how we raise our children, we just reprimand them and they understand."

The social welfare institution was also identified as an important stakeholder in children's schooling in the area under this study. This program provided needy children with required resources to attend school such as school uniform, toiletries and transport. The study revealed that the majority of children in this particular school were under the social welfare care. However, interestingly, the study also found that the majority of the parents of children who had dropped out blamed the social welfare program for their children's leaving school. The parents indicated that the social workers failed to provide their children with items such as school uniform, shoes, food and toiletry and this was the reason why their children could not stay in school. When consulted, the Social Welfare office reported that

according to their records, all the children in the area who were eligible for government's assistance were constantly provided with all the necessary resources. The Social Welfare indicated that it was not true that the children lacked the identified items. Rather according to this department, the children left school simply because they were not interested and were using the Social Welfare as an excuse.

14.0 The impacts of policy on children's schooling in the area under study

Policy was found to have a significant impact on children's schooling in this particular context. The main policy issue that was responsible for the children's less satisfactory school attendance and eventual drop out was the school calendar year. All the government owned schools in the country followed a standardized school calendar year. In this context it was found that the community's hunting period clashed with the time when children were supposed to be in school. The Ministry of Education in the country also had a policy that barred students from coming back to school if they had been absent for 20 days or more without a valid explanation. However, in this particular school, since school dropouts were so prevalent, those children who decided to come back after the hunting period were allowed, even though this contravened the school policy. However, it was reported that even for those who decided to come back after the hunting activities, when they got there, they often found that they missed a lot of material and decided to drop out.

15.0 Discussions

The circumstances identified in this study as contributory factors to school dropout signify the dissonances in the school-community interrelations which impacted children's schooling. The study revealed that dropouts were prevalent among younger children in the school and this was attributed to the fact that they were too young to be separated from their parents. This issue illuminates the paradoxical situation that the government finds itself in trying to provide education to children found in sparsely populated environments which are also scattered in various small settlements. It is clear that the removal of children from their homes to live in the hostels was having a negative effect on their schooling. Therefore, this calls for a re-look into this arrangement to find ways to increase children's access to their families so as to reduce separation anxiety.

Like previous studies, this research found some incompatibilities between children's lifestyle at their homes and that which is expected of them at school. For example, the findings indicated that, at school, the caretakers and teachers perceived the children to be not well trained to follow rules and take up responsibilities. The parents on the other hand pointed out that they taught their children what was important to their lifestyle which was not necessarily what was deemed important at school. This denotes a clash of values between the two institutions, which needs to be addressed with utmost diligence. Studies indicate that minority populations are often cynical of governments and other mainstream institutions' intentions in socializing their children which seem to undermine their cultures and impose foreign practices upon them (Le Roux 1999; Pansiri 2011; Sekere 2011). Thus the school in this study needs to find an operational balance that recognizes the norms and values of the local community and at the same time socialize the children in a manner desired in main stream settings.

It is clear from this study that there is a disconnect between the school and the community it serves. The teachers in the study expressed a lot of frustration over their failure to have a close relationship with the students, which they blamed on the children's upbringing. The same went for the relationship with the parents who were presented as unsupportive of their children's schooling and even in some instances directly blamed for children dropping out. This exposes the shortcomings in the preparation of teachers to work in areas such as in this study. It is evident that the school personnel were

not well equipped to deal with people whose way of life was different from the conventional practices in the larger society. It is also undeniable that the fact that the teachers themselves were from the main stream society, influenced the way they viewed the children and their parents and somehow saw them as a problem, rather than as being different. This conscious or incognizant prejudice coupled with lack of training on how to deal with minority populations does not provide for a comfortable place at school for the children to stay. The teachers need to be empowered to understand the local communities and also adopt a sensitive approach in dealing with them. This inward looking perspective on the part of the educators may provide a breakthrough in infusing education in the lives of minority populations.

The disharmony between the school calendar year and the community's economic activities as identified in the study is evidence that the government needs to address the issue of school calendar year to accommodate unique needs of people living in non-mainstream settings. Lakin and Gasperini (2003) note that if societies are serious about improving the livelihoods of people in disadvantaged areas, fundamental structural changes need to be made to the education offered to those people to make it responsive to their needs. In fact Alexander (2008), says it is dangerous to be insensitive to the local context of the learners, as such education should be conceptualized in terms of meeting their contextual needs. The findings of this study are a clear indication that the one-size fits all model of education provided to all schools in the country is not effective in all contexts.

On the other hand, the study reported that a majority of the parents blamed the social welfare's failure to provide their children with school items as reasons for dropping out. This indicates an excessive dependency on government aid as the parents did not see this responsibility as their own. It seemed the government's effort to assist the community has bred a dependency syndrome such that people did not make efforts to be self-reliant. Actually in this study, it seemed government aid partly contributed to children's dropping out of school because both the dropped out children and their parents knew that the government will provide for them when they eventually have no means of supporting themselves. Empirical evidence from various studies indicate negative effects of government aid on the economic development of the poor in similar situations (Dalgaard 2004; Easterly, Ross and David 2004; Hansen & Tarp 2001; Rajan and Subramanian 2007), brewing a dependency syndrome and facilitating corruption. In fact some reports have gone as far as blaming lack of development in places such as Africa on the World Bank. It is believed once countries receive aid, it is not easy to get out of this trap (Appolinario 2010). A similar situation seemed to be developing in this context. As such, it is crucial for government to find a way to transfer some of the responsibility back to the parents and the community. Providing needy children with necessary items to attend school may not be avoidable, however, providing the families with food baskets need to be reconsidered with the spirit of encouraging people to fend for themselves. This in a way may discourage children from dropping out knowing that life at home is not easy and if they drop out they are destined to similar struggles in their future.

A critical element that came out of this study is the need to empower the local community to actively participate in the processes of educating their children. The findings of the study suggest that the parents of children who dropped out, did not view themselves as having any power to have an influence in the way things were done concerning their children's schooling. This was demonstrated in several instances where the parents expressed dissatisfaction about certain things concerning school such as missing their children, doing chores, corporal punishment and the school calendar year. However, it was clear they never made efforts to make their concerns known, or offer suggestions on what could be done. Rather, the response to these discontents was children dropping out of school and the parents supporting the decision by not taking any action when the children came back home. This sends a message that, according to the community, if education is not offered in a manner that is compatible with their lives then they will live without it. This poses a challenge to the government to

find ways to effectively engage the community in the schooling of their children, because it is clear that without their participation school dropouts will continue. As long as the school and the community operate independent of each other, there will continue to be misconceptions about each other which consequently affect children's schooling. Devarajan and Shah (2004) advise that it is important to involve the concerned communities in decision making meant to address their situation and have them as active participants of change.

16.0 Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the problem of school dropout is multi-sided. Education providers need to be cognizant of the fact that with school they bring along foreign concepts and practices which may not blend well with the local modes of operation and as such they should be open-minded and be ready to accommodate unique circumstances on the ground. However, this does not mean that the local communities themselves do not have a responsibility to be accommodative of the changes required of them. It is critical for the two institutions to be flexible and work closely together to develop a system that works for the benefit of the children to promote their stay in school.

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