



AN INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BOYS
DROPPING OUT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE KHOMAS REGION IN
NAMIBIA.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that contribute to boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region. According to statistical reports of the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) Education Statistics at the Ministry of Education, on average, early school leaving is a greater problem among male learners than among female learners. This is an exception only in two regions. Another aim was to identify the needs which are specific to the education of boys and what could be done to increase retention of boys in secondary schools.

A qualitative case study approach was used for this study. The population comprised of secondary school teachers, principals and boys, including those who have dropped out of school, in the Khomas Region. The following purposeful sampling strategies were employed to obtain the sample: stratified purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, and purposeful random sampling. The sample consisted of the following stratified purposeful sub-samples: five principals by virtue of their positions as managers of schools, five most experienced teachers, five focus groups of boys currently in school, one group per school and 25 boys who had dropped out of school (five boys who had dropped out per school). Document analysis and semi-structured interviews were used as data collection instruments. The results revealed that there are several factors that influence boys to drop out of school. These range from the individual, family, school and community related factors. The top most factors that were identified as contributing

towards boys' dropping out of school are: poor parental support in both academic and social lives of boys, peer pressure and failure on the part of boys to value and appreciate education at their age.

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Declarations

I, Viola H. Mapani, declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or in part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BETD	Basic Education Teachers' Diploma
DASE	Diploma in Advanced Study in Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary School
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GPI	Gender Parity Index
MASTEP	Mathematics & Science Teachers' Extension Program
MBESC	Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
M o E	Ministry of Education
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community

UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
UNESCO-IS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
U.S.A	United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation to the Study

The education of boys is one of the problems confronting the education systems both in the developed and developing nations in the twenty-first century especially boys' underachievement and dropping out of school (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007; Weaver-Hightower, 2008; Martino, Kehler & Weaver-Hightower, 2009). Some of the countries experiencing challenges in the education of boys include the United States of America (U.S.A), United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, and the Caribbeans (Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Saint Lucia, Saint Vicent and Uruguay, have a gender parity of 110 girls for every 100 boys (UNESCO, 2005). Countries such as the United States of America have come up with new ways of solving the problem of underachievement, i.e., mix high performer learners with poor performers in class (Francis, Skelton & Read, 2010). A survey of gender and education indicate that boys are facing a host of problems. A study by Silova and Magno (2004) in Eastern Europe and Russian Federation highlights some of the challenges there such as dropping out of school to look for work. An inquiry into the education of boys in Australia shows that more boys than girls are underachieving, dropping out of school, being suspended and playing truant. The United States of America, Canada and United Kingdom are also

experiencing the same challenges with boys in school. Another major concern in these countries is that fewer boys than girls are getting into colleges or universities. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the following countries tend to be biased against boys in that there are more girls than boys enrolled in school: Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland (UNICEF, 2004).

In Namibia education statistics on enrollment figures at the Ministry of Education from 2004 to 2007 show that there are more girls in schools than boys, both at primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; National Planning Commission, 2004). More girls than boys are completing school despite that more boys than girls are enrolled in grade one (Ministry of Education, 2007). According to education statistics, there were 33 963 boys and 32 247 girls enrolled in grade one in 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2005). In the following year (2006), a total of 33 959 boys and 32 034 girls were enrolled, and in 2007, there were 35 659 boys and 32 202 girls (Ministry of Education, 2006, 2007). Though more boys are enrolled in grade one, later girls outnumber boys as learners move from primary to junior and senior secondary levels. For example there were more boys than girls in grades 1 to 5 in 2004 to 2007 and in grade 6 the number of boys declined and remained lower than that of girls up to grade 7 (Ministry of Education 2005, 2006, 2007). At junior and senior secondary levels, girls' enrollment remained higher than that of boys (Ministry of Education, 2003,

2005 & 2007). The exception to this general trend is the Caprivi and Kavango regions where more boys are enrolled than girls at primary and secondary levels. Girls generally drop out of school because of teenage pregnancy and in the Kavango Region the rate is about 35% (National Planning commission, 2004).

The situation at primary level therefore suggests that boys start dropping out of schools much earlier than girls (Ministry of Education, 2003, 2005 & 2007). Article 20 of the Namibian constitution says; “all persons shall have the right to education, primary education shall be compulsory and children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed primary education or have attained the age of 16, whichever comes first” (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990, p. 10). Furthermore Education Act 2001 stipulates that parents are expected to ensure that a child is registered with a school and regularly attends school (Ministry of Education, 2001). Though it is compulsory for children of primary school age to attend school, parents do not always ensure that their children attend school and remain in school. This situation is made worse because there is no recognized agency to enforce the law. The law on compulsory education is also weak on the grounds that if a learner turns 16 years before she or he finishes primary education then the learner has no obligation to remain in school. The dropping out of school of boys as early as primary school contributes to gender differences that exist at secondary level. According to UNESCO (2005), differences in gender at

secondary level can result from differences at entry to primary, completion at primary and at transition from primary to junior secondary phase.

At the following institutions of higher learning namely, the four colleges of education, Caprivi, Rundu, Ongwediva and Windhoek colleges of education; University of Namibia and Polytechnic of Namibia, female students dominate (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008). More female students are studying at these institutions than male students a situation resembling that of USA, UK, and Australia.

The provided statistics above indicate that girls generally outnumber boys as learners move through the different phases of education in Namibia. To find the causes of this trend, the urban schools in Windhoek in the Khomas Region provided a platform through which the dropping out of school of boys was studied. Windhoek schools were selected because of diversity which characterizes this urban area. It has a rich mixture of cultural and ethnic groupings (Shaningwa, 2009). Furthermore, several industries and social amenities located in the region and attract a large population to the region. Schools enroll children from different ethnic groups, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Mowes, 1997).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to the Ministry of Education (2007, p.58) the “extraordinary feature of the Namibian school survival rates [is] that they [are] consistently higher for females than for males ... confirming that on average, early school leaving [is] a greater problem among male learners than among female learners.” The factors that contribute to boys dropping out of school have not been investigated in Namibia, though studies have been conducted on the causes of dropout among girls (Kasanda & Shaimemanya, 1997; Hauuanga, 2002; Rosalind, 2004). The government has put efforts into providing greater access to the girl child and encouraged girls to remain in school and to study in subject areas that were dominated by boys in the past (National Planning Commission, 1995/96-199/2000). Thus the problems facing girls’ education have been explored and strategies formulated to counter them. On the other hand there is little information on the causes of dropout among boys in Namibia. This research therefore seeks to fill this gap, so that interventions can be formulated to aid the success of boys in schools. Boy drop-outs are a concern because of the socio and economic implications to the boys and the nation. Thus this study has greater implications for policy planners in education and government. The study therefore attempted to explore the factors contributing to boys leaving school earlier than girls in secondary schools in the Khomas Region.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study intends to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify factors which affect the progress of boys in secondary schools.
- To identify needs which are specific to the education of boys.
- To find out what schools have put in place to encourage boys to remain in school.
- To find out what could be done to increase retention of boys in schools.

1.4 Significance of the Study

An investigation into the factors that affect the education of boys in secondary schools was necessary. Education in Namibia receives large amount of funds from the annual budget, for instance in the budget projected for 2010 to 2012, education has been given the largest increase in expenditure with an additional of N\$908 million, making a total of \$16.9 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2009; Heita, 2009). The commitment on the part of the government towards education reflects the emphasis it places on the education of the youth and the provision of productive skills (Ministry of Finance, 2009). It is, therefore, a waste of finances for a learner to drop out of school before acquiring literacy and numeracy skills because the learner loses the opportunity to acquire skills required for further learning (Ministry of Education, 2007). For the purposes of efficient use of

financial resources and for the benefit of the boys, their parents and the whole nation, they should be encouraged to complete at least their secondary education.

By attending school up to grade 12, boys have a better chance of finding employment or being self-employed. They also obtain the required foundation skills which would enable them to enter the vocational and tertiary institutions for more education. Secondary education is important because it does not only provide the adolescents with skills and knowledge, but also fosters social cohesion which is necessary for economic prosperity and also helps transmit cultural and ethical values needed to participate in society (Verspoor, 2008). Quality general education helps increase HIV/AIDS awareness and other health risks, and promotes democratic values (Verspoor, 2008). Boys should therefore be encouraged to remain in school to get an education that will help them be productive citizens in society.

The dropping out of boys from secondary schools will lead to an increase of a permanent class of unskilled and undereducated males in the country. Uneducated or less educated boys run the risk of being unemployed, unfulfilled and experiencing more social problems in their lives. Already less educated men and boys sit at the intersections of major streets waiting to be hired as casual laborers in Windhoek. Therefore undereducated boys are more likely to be unemployed and if employed, their salaries are low and it is difficult to advance in the jobs (Ream & Rumberger, 2008). School dropouts also contribute to the

increase in criminal activities (Stephen, Plank & DeLuca, 2008). One of the main functions of education is to produce the type of persons who are productive (Alexander & Winne, 2006), capable of critical thinking (Freire, 1921), able to communicate and respect others (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Namibia Vision 2030 aims at producing young people who are educated, skilled, responsible, health and empowered to play an active role in shaping a better society (The Office of the President, 2004). In order for this to be fully realized, appropriate measures should be considered to improve retention of the “boy child” in school in the Khomas Region where more boys flock to from other regions (Ashton, Mushaandja & Pomuti, 2009).

The Namibian government has also initiated changes in the curriculum in an attempt to provide quality education. Innovative subjects like entrepreneurship, information and communication technology, and crafts and technology have been added to the curriculum (Ministry of finance, 2009). Changes in the assessments and examinations, and teaching methods have been implemented (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). Several educational policies have been introduced to help create an environment that encourages and supports learners to remain in school and benefit from education. The policies include the exemption of payment of tuition, boarding or other fees for learners who cannot afford to pay for themselves like orphans and vulnerable children (Ministry of Education, 2008). The school policy on learner pregnancy provides for a boy

who has impregnated a school girl to continue with education at the same school or another after the confinement of the girl ends (Ministry of Education, 2009). In this case a boy who would have dropped out of school is encouraged to stay on. Without protecting policies such as these some learners would have dropped out of school due to discrimination. The above policies in education indicate the commitment on the part of the government of Namibia to provide a good learning environment and quality education.

Before independence education was for a small elite group of Whites and a few Blacks who were educated for specific jobs that were required by the colonial masters (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). Since independence in 1990 the government of Namibia has continued to improve the education system. In order to achieve education for all, the Ministry of Education has adopted four major goals in education. The four major goals of education are access, equity, quality and democracy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). As well as expanding access to education it is also important that retention of learners in schools should be promoted. This should be expanded to emphasize quality retention. In the current situation more boys than girls are dropping out of school as they progress in education; however it is in the interest of achieving gender equity that the problem of more boys than girls dropping out of school should be addressed. This must be addressed without neglecting the needs of girls.

The phenomenon of boys dropping out of schools has been investigated internationally by different researchers and several factors identified that affect boys' schooling (e.g., Perry, 1997; House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002; Harrington, 2002; Beekhoven & Dekkers, 2005). In Namibia this study is one of the few research works in the education sector that investigated the factors that contributed to boys dropping out of school. Martino, Lingard & Mills (2004) argue for research-based knowledge for teachers so that practice is informed by empirical evidence. By researching factors influencing boys' premature termination of education at secondary schools in the Khomas Region, the causes of dropping out of secondary school were identified and better understood and this will contribute towards improving the provision of education to boys. The understanding obtained will enlighten teachers, parents, policy makers and other stakeholders in education and help plan interventions to lessen early school leaving among boys and increase the retention of boys in school thereby improving the provision of education.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

One of the constraints to accomplishing this study was locating boys who dropped out of school. In the first instance boys could only be traced if contact details were available or someone knew where to find them. In the absence of this important information it was impossible to reach them. Tracing the boys who

dropped out of school was difficult because in most cases the information provided to the school had insufficient contact details. For instance lack of telephone numbers in the absence of a complete residential details or incorrect telephone numbers or out of coverage area.

It was also difficult to obtain accurate figures of drop-outs from the schools. Some records in the school did not indicate the gender of the learner who dropped out. For this reason the names of boys whose gender was not indicated were automatically excluded since the gender was not obvious to the researcher. This may have compromised the actual figures of dropouts at each site.

Furthermore, some boys who dropped out of school could not be reached and the reasons for their dropping were not known implying that there may be factors that were not captured by this research.

Another challenge was that schools do not have a uniform way of keeping the records of drop-outs. Furthermore sometimes principals did not forward all information on the dropouts to the Ministry of Education. As a result of this loophole, reconciling the figures of drop-outs as reported by education statistics and in the school records was challenge.

The problem of boys dropping out of school more than girls in the country is wide, save in two regions, the Caprivi and Kavango. This study was only limited to the Khomas Region though Namibia is a large country with thirteen regions. The researcher did not have the financial means and time to carry out the study in

all the thirteen regions in order to obtain a broad picture on the phenomenon under study.

The absence of relevant literature was a limitation during the period of literature review. There was very little literature on the education of boys on Namibia as this study was pioneering in this area. The study would have also benefited from the views of participants from boys only schools. The schools that participated in the study were co-education schools.

As an international student there was the disadvantage of unfamiliarity with the cultural context in which the study was being conducted. This may have had an impact on the deep understanding of the causes of boys dropping out of school.

The study is in no terms exhaustive on the topic and cannot be generalized to other regions and towns that were not visited during the study period.

1.6 Definition of Terms

In this study, the following terms should be understood as follows:

Gender sensitivity means being sympathetic about the needs of both girls and boys, and creating school systems, classrooms and society in which both boys and girls are encouraged to remain in school – the ultimate objective of Education for All (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993).

Gender refers to differential treatment of girls and boys and allocating them different roles, duties, and responsibilities which are culturally or socially ascribed to girls and boys.

Gender Parity Index refers to the ratio of the number of female learners enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education to the number of male learners enrolled in each level.

Drop-out (noun) refers to a learner who leaves school prematurely before completing grade 12 in the formal education.

Boys at risk refer to boys who are likely to drop out of school because personal, school or out of school factors which weaken their hold on school.

Laddism a culture found among some boys which is characterized by an anti-school attitude.

Socialization is the process by which young members of the community are integrated into the community. Boys and girls are socialized at an early age into their gender roles, through toys, books, and role models presented to them.

1.7 Summary

This chapter provides the background to the research problem of why more boys than girls drop out of school in 11 out of 13 regions. In the other two regions viz: the Caprivi and Kavango the trend is different, with more girls than boys

dropping out of school. The objectives of the study were to identify factors that lead to boys dropping out of secondary schools and to find solutions that can contribute towards reducing the dropout rates. The problem of boys dropping out of school was a great concern because of the social and economic implications to the boys, their families, community and the nation.

The next chapter provides a literature review to the research problem.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the general trends in boys' education and the concerns about school boys in different countries. The chapter presents the theoretical framework that guided this study. Further, it identifies the factors that contribute to boys dropping out of school and examines strategies that have been recommended or implemented in schools to help increase boys' interest in school and retain them.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The statistical data from the Ministry of Education suggests that more boys than girls are enrolled at the beginning in primary schools but the number of boys decline as boys move from primary and secondary schools to tertiary level (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006). This suggests that boys are leaving school prematurely. In order to understand this phenomenon, the study is informed by Rumberger's (2001) two theoretical frameworks. One framework focuses on "the contextual factors found in the students' families, schools,

communities and peers,” which contribute to boys and girls dropping out of school (Rumberger 2001, p.10).

The other framework focuses on attributes of learners such as “values, attitudes, and behavior” (Rumberger, (2001, p.10), and how the attributes influence learners’ decision to withdraw from school. Learners are either engaged or disengaged in school academic and/or social activities at school. A learner may drop out of school because of disengagement from both school academic and social activities or from one of the two activities. Dropping out of school is viewed as the last event in a long process of disengagement from academic and social activities (Stephen, Plank & DeLuca, 2008).

By examining boys’ dropout problem in the light of the two perspectives, the researcher was able to identify student attributes and factors from learner’s family, the school, peers and the community which are linked to dropping out. According to Rumberger (2001) both frameworks are useful and necessary to understand learner drop-out problem.

Archambault, Jonosz, Fallu, and Pangani (2009) state that the construct of student engagement is central to most theories of school dropout such as Tinto’s (1975) model, Finn’s (1989) participation-identification model of school withdrawal, Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesco and Fernandenz’s (1989) concepts of educational engagement and school membership and Rumberger and Larson’s (1998) academic and social engagement. The concept of student engagement

originates from Hirsch's (1969) social control theory (Archambault, Janosz, Fallu, & Pangani, 2009). According to Archambault, et al. (2009, p. 652) the emphasis in social control theory is on "individual feelings of attachment and belonging to social institutions in which youthful antisocial behavior is viewed as a breakdown of bonds between the individual and society." The bonds are characterised by attachment, commitment involvement and belief (Hirsch, 2002, p.20-23). Individuals become attached to schools, peers, commit to conventional activities and believe in a common value system (Huebner & Betts, 2002). Therefore in educational settings the disengagement of students from academic and/or social activities may be a result of weakened bond between the learner and the school (Archambault, et al., 2009).

Fredricks et al. (2004) describe the concept of school engagement as one that has attracted growing interest as a means of improving poor academic achievement, high levels of student boredom and disaffection and high numbers of drop-outs . The concept of student engagement encompasses three components namely behavioral engagement, affective engagement and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). Behavioral engagement involves the participation of learners in academic, social or extracurricular activities at school. It entails following school rules, conforming to classroom norms, participating during lessons, being attentive, asking questions, contributing in class and so on. Affective engagement involves attitude towards teachers, class mates and school in general. The emotional aspect is one considered to be involved in bond

formation between the individual learner and the school. The cognitive aspect involves willingness on the part of the learners to learn, regulate themselves and use strategy in their education. Learners who are engaged in school are involved in academic, social and extracurricular activities. Of the three components in learner engagement, the behavioral dimension is more predictive of learner dropout from school (Eccles, 2004; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). However, the students disengage psychologically first before the disengagement is displayed through behavior.

Learners disengage from schools in different ways. Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (2000) classify school dropouts in four categories: the quiet dropout; disengaged dropout, low-achiever dropout, and the maladjusted dropout. The quiet school drop-outs are generally unnoticed in the school until they literally drop out of school. They have no behavioral problems, do not show openly their difficulties at school but have low grades. They are not motivated towards education. The disengaged drop-out dislike school, their grades are slightly better than those of the quiet dropouts and have more disciplinary cases than the quiet dropouts. Low-achiever dropouts experience severe difficulties in the school performance. They have very poor grades below minimal requirements than the disengaged drop-outs and they show average-low levels of school misbehavior. Maladjusted drop-outs are characterized by high levels of misbehavior, weak motivation and academic performance. They have the worst school profile.

Learners disengage from school in different ways, one form of disengagement is not applicable to all disengaged learners. Some learners disengage from learning but remain in school while others withdraw from school completely.

The two perspectives that have been discussed guided the research in understanding the factors that contributed to boys dropping out of school.

2.3 The Global and Regional Trends on Boys' Education

Investigation into boys' educational issues goes as far back as the 1890s. Zyngier (2009) mentions an academic title on boys which date as far as 1894. In the 1960s Wirtanen (1969) was one of the researchers who carried out an investigation on why and how boys dropped out of high school. The recent concerns of boys' education in the 1990s are not a new phenomenon. The debates on boys' education go and come over the years (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Sometimes the revisit on boys' education has been in the form of a backlash against the gains made on behalf of girls by feminists.

The case of boys dropping out of school is not unique to Namibia. Other countries are experiencing the same phenomenon. Apart from underachieving among boys, there is a gender gap in school attendance, graduation rates, literacy rates and there are problems with behavior among boys in other countries (Kimmel, 2010). As a result of these factors concern for boys' education has grown since 1990s. In countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Germany, Japan and Iceland, among others, the concern

for boys and education has been reported and debated (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). The debates have been more prominent in developed countries. Australia has lead in the debates and formulation of policy on boys' education. The issues of boys' education are generally in two categories, academic, and social (Weaver-Hightower, 2009). Academic problems have included underachieving in school, poor literacy skills, dropping out of school, fewer boys going to college and universities. Social related problems among boys have ranged, drug and alcohol abuse, risk taking behavior.

In the 1970s and 1980s the work on gender and education, focused mostly on girls and girls' issues as in many societies women are at a disadvantage socially, culturally, politically and economically (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). In the mid-1990s policy, practice and research on gender and education increasingly focused on boys (Cresswell & Withers, 2002; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Griffin & Lees, 1997; Alloway & Gilbert, 1997). Though there has been a concern in the past 20 years for boys, in most educational systems, girls are still at a disadvantage than boys (Zyngier, 2009). This is especially so in developing countries.

In Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Mauritius, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Uruguay boys are reported to be greatly disadvantaged, for every 100 boys there are 110 girls entering secondary school (UNESCO, 2005). In Latin America and the Caribbean, boys are reported to have lower academic achievement, higher rates

of repetition, high absenteeism rate, and even dropping out of school (UNICEF, 2004).

According to the findings of Cappon (2011), even among developed countries such as the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) the problem of boys dropping out of school is a current problem requiring innovative solutions. Canada is one of the countries among high performers in education in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and yet is experiencing similar problems in boy education. This is an organization that consists of 34 of the most advanced countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, U.S.A, UK, France, Germany, Finland, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and most EU countries as well as some developing countries like Mexico, Chile, Turkey and developing economies of Asia, such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea have experienced the problem this problem in one way or another and some of them have been discussed below, to highlight some differences and similarities in the enormity of the problem with Namibia. Boys in Canada are experiencing problems such as lower attendance rate in colleges when compared to girls.

In the 1990s it was perceived that girls in Australia were doing better than boys following an emphasis on the education of girls in the 1980s. Girls were encouraged to enter into the sciences, take mathematics at advanced levels and

technology subjects (Cresswell, Rowe, & Withers, 2002). For this reason girls seemed to have improved in their education outcomes. The concern for boys arose due to some academic and social indicators that pointed to several problems in the education of boys. Society too was alarmed that boys were underachieving and disengaging from learning. This resulted into an intensive inquiry into the problems facing boys in Australia.

The Australian Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into boys' education conducted in 2002 reveals that boys performed poorly in different aspects of literacy, had problems of truancy, a lower retention rate than girls, 80 % of students suspended or excluded are boys, and that indigenous boys achieve lower and are more likely to leave school early compared to non-indigenous boys and fewer girls than boys proceed to higher education (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). The cause for early school leaving in Australia is linked to the quality of teaching, curriculum, resources, socio-economic status, geographic locality, ethnicity, aboriginality, attitudes to school, parental education, school type, and parent' country of birth (House of Representatives; Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). Boys are underachieving compared to girls, overrepresented in remedial education and have higher levels of behavioral problems (Cresswell, Rowe & Withers, 2002). The Aboriginal boys, working class boys and non heterosexual boys are most affected by problems facing boys in Australia (Martino, Kehler & Weaver-Hightower, 2009). There is also a concern about male teachers in the

teaching profession as there are more female teachers than male teachers in both primary and secondary to act as role models for boys. The presence of male role models in the teaching profession is viewed as one of the possible strategies towards fixing boys' problems (Martino, Kehler & Weaver-Hightower, 2009).

As in Australia, in the United States of America during the mid-1990s there was a shift in focus to boys' educational issues. In the USA boys are reported to lag behind in literacy, have high school drop-out rates, repeat grades, have high frequencies of being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), are over represented in special education, fewer boys than girls enroll at an average university, boys experience more disciplinary problems, suspension and expulsion (Weaver-Hightower, 2009). They are reported to have "poor academic achievement, disciplinary problems, being over-diagnosed and referred to special educational services, experiencing more athletic over-injury, bullying, peer harassment, and school violence" (Reichert, Kuriloff & Stout, 2009, p57). Boys in the U.S.A. are also more likely to commit suicide, abuse alcohol and drugs, to be victims of violence, and to display bad behavior, habits and attitudes that stand in conflict with school success (Weaver-Hightower, 2009). Some of the issues mentioned here are similar to the ones being experienced by boys in Australia.

In the U.S.A. boys appear less motivated with school than girls and are more likely to disengage from school than girls. Boys' disengagement from school

affects different groups in the urban, suburban, rural, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, the wealthy, middle-income and low income (Sax, 2007). At national level black boys are most affected and more likely to be suspended and expelled from school, diagnosed with some learning disability or classified as mentally retarded, arrested within the school premises, and fewer black boys as well as Latinos enroll for college or university (McCready, 2009 and Weaver-Hightower, 2009). In general in the United States of America at an average university the student body is composed of 58 percent female, 42 percent male and the trend is the same in Canada and in Australia (Sax, 2007).

In the United Kingdom, the underachievement of boys started making headlines in 1995 following the marketisation of education. This followed the need to raise school performance in the country since national economic growth was associated with academic achievement (Mills, Francis & Skelton, 2009). Schools are expected to contribute to the economic growth of the country and it is hoped that the economic growth will be realized through high standards in education. Boys and girls are tested at different ages in the United Kingdom and the school performance is rated based on the academic performance in the tests of the learners (Timimi, 2005). Based on the performance of each school, parents choose the school they would like their child to attend. The competition among the schools is an incentive to raise the performance among boys and girls. According to Timimi (2005) boys contribute less to the performance of the league tables, consume larger amount of resources for additional support and

special needs, and have behavioral problems. In comparison to boys, girls are performing better than boys at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). This is attributed to coursework favoring girls, lack of male models for boys to emulate and the prevalence of the culture of 'laddism' where boys assume an anti-school attitude (Jackson, 2002; Rayment, 2006). The lack of male role models especially in primary schools is also an issue in the USA as well as in Australia. Overall in North America and Europe the main boy crisis is attendance, achievement and behavioral problems (Kimmel, 2010).

UNESCO (2007) revealed that:

- Boys were more likely to be low performing students and to repeat grades, and to leave school at a younger age than girls.
- They were also more likely to participate in shorter and less academic secondary programmes not leading to tertiary education, and to leave school early to make a living.
- The trend in under participation of boys in education also indicated that socio-economic context, occupational practices and gender identity seemed to play a role in keeping boys away from school. In addition in farming communities most young male herders came from poor families and were more likely than girls to drop out of school in order to work and contribute to family income.
- Boys' conformity to 'masculine' gender identity that clashed with school systems especially schools that had more female influence were another

factor in boys' school disaffection and underachievement and the examples were Australia and Jamaica.

The SADC Region

In the SADC region, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland make up the number of countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa that have less boys enrolled in secondary schools (Verspoor, 2008, and UNICEF, 2004). The United Nations Statistics Division (2011) gives Gender Parity Index (GPI) in secondary school level enrollment in the above named countries. Botswana had a GPI of 1.18 in 1991 and 1.05 in 2005. In Lesotho the GPI was 1.42 in 1991 and 1.38 in 2009. The reason for the wide gender gap in Lesotho was the under participation of boys in education (UNESCO, 2007). In Mauritius the GPI was 1.4 in 1991 and 1.02 in 2009. Mauritius is one of the countries which has almost closed the gender gap in secondary school compared to other countries in the SADC in the same given period. South Africa with a Gender Parity Index of 1.18 in 1991 has been reduced to 1.05 and still needs to close the gender gap between boys and girls. Swaziland had a GPI of 1.02 in 2009 and has almost closed the gender gap. The given statistics indicate that though the gender gap is still visible, there have been steady efforts in these countries to close the gender gap.

Generally, more girls than boys are enrolled in schools in these countries. Though girls are generally doing better than boys it is still a challenge to turn

their good performance into job opportunities. There are still few women in the workforce and politics compared to men. Silova and Magno (2004, p.435) point out that "... disparities between boys' and girls' enrollment are often concentrated within population groups even in countries ..." that do not have problems of wide gaps in overall enrollment. Usually children from socially or economically disadvantaged groups are the most likely to be disadvantaged (Silova & Magno, 2004). It may be the case that the boys who are most affected in the SADC region, belong to the socially or economically disadvantaged group.

Much attention has been given to girls' than to boys' educational issues in the SADC region. Though there is limited information on boys' education in the SADC region, it is known that boys drop out of school to find jobs in South African mines so they can remit money home. Sometimes they leave school because they are required to look after family cattle (UNICEF, 2004; Chipika, 2007). In Lesotho, it is a tradition of boys to herd livestock and is regarded as a good way to socialize the male child and make him a responsible member of his family and society (Jha and Kelleher, 2006).

School fees also contribute in reducing access to education and so does poverty, the result is boy children leave school much earlier to become income earners (Tolmay, 2005).

The information provided in this study on factors contributing to boys dropping out of school gives an opportunity for further studies in the SADC region and the whole of the Sub-Saharan Africa since much attention is on the 'girl child'.

According to Weaver- Hightower (2003) though the focus on boys' education is needed in order to complement the work that has been done for the "girl child" there is discontentment in some quarters. There is a fear that the "girl child" will be neglected as the focus shifts to the "boy child" which also requires funding. On the other hand, there is a relief that the "boy child" has finally got the attention that has been long overdue.

Several factors have contributed to the shift of attention from girls and girls' issues to boys' education. Weaver- Hightower (2003) mentions the following causes: media reports on the disadvantages facing boys in school; the work of feminists in the 1970s and 1980s and early 1990s which opened doors too for examining social needs of men and later of boys; educational reforms; the backlash politics after girls made great strides in education and surpassed boys in many areas. Other contributing factors include the changes in the economies in the developed world that are more into providing services resulting into feminization of the work force; parental concern for the future of the children and the excitement of a new area for researchers (Weaver- Hightower, 2003, 2008).

2.4 Factors Contributing to Boys Dropping out of Secondary Schools

Many factors have been attributed to the current disaffection towards school among boys. Some have argued that boys are not doing well with school because of the feminization of the education. At elementary school there are more female

teachers than male teachers and the curriculum has been reformed so as to favor girls who were not doing well in male dominated subjects like mathematics, sciences.

Boys desire to be perceived as masculine; therefore they distance themselves from any subjects or activities that are labeled feminine or gay. For example, English is generally perceived as feminine subject so boys feel pressured not to do well so that they are not looked down upon by other males (Kimmel, 2000).

The factors that contribute to early school leaving can be broadly classified into the following categories: socialization, student characteristics, family factors, peer pressure, school and community factors.

2.4.1 Individual Attributes of Boys

These are factors that are specific to individual boys, since no two boys are the same cannot be generalized across board.

2.4.1.1 Socialization

Socialization is the process by which young members of the community are integrated into the community. By this process the new members are taught norms, values and roles to which they are expected to conform (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995). Boys and girls are socialized at an early age into their gender roles, through toys, books, and role models presented to them (Burton, 1993). Deviations from the expected behavior are disapproved, ridiculed, or even

punished. Therefore, boys learn to be “males” or “masculine” at an early age. The family, friends, society, and media play a part in helping boys define what is masculine. According to Askew and Ross (1988, p.2), the media representation of a male is that of being “tough, strong, aggressive, independent, brave, sexually active, rational, intelligent and so on.” Rayment (2006) mentions similar traits: strength either mentally or physically or both, clever, unemotional, aggression and breadwinners. Otipa (2006) brings to light same stereotypes found in many black communities where young men and boys have been socialized into believing that real men do not cry, are physically strong, decision makers, initiate sex, have several partners, fight back and are never beaten by girls. It is part of the dominant masculinity for boys not to show any emotions. James (2007), however, states that boys have emotions but lack the skills or freedom to express their emotions. Furthermore boys “believe in the ‘boy code’ that boys do not talk about their feelings” and those who do so are looked down upon as weak (James, 2007, p.116). Boys assimilate these images of what is to be “male”.

In the construction of masculinity boys engage in verbal abuse, bullying and aggressive behavior towards each other, girls, and teachers. By this means they exhibit their masculinity and position themselves among other males and establish their status (Askew & Ross, 1988). While both boys and girls participate in bullying, boys are more likely than girls to be bullied and to bully others (James, 2007). However not all boys participate in bullying or aggressive behavior. A school based research in Britain at four schools, conducted by Kane

(2006) among working class' boys who had been excluded from school, suggests that the behavior by which boys express their masculinity sometimes leads to their exclusion from school. In Kane's (2006) study the boys were excluded for offences such as persistent disobedience, aggression towards their teachers, aggressive and threatening behavior, and verbal abuse. Schools may discharge boys or any other learner if their behavior is contrary to the school norms and is a threat to other learners and teachers.

In the United Kingdom, some boys express their masculinity through "laddishness" culture which is anti-school. Undertaking academic work is perceived as feminine and therefore to be avoided or at least one must appear to avoid it. Hard work also means that one is incapable or lacks intelligence. Jackson (2002) highlights the fact that Western society places high value on 'ability' and in school settings it is academic ability that is highly valued. Therefore, boys adopt strategies that will divert attention from their academic inability. Some of the strategies include procrastination, deliberate withdraw of effort, avoiding appearance of working and act out disruptive behavior (Jackson, 2002). The above strategies work because they send a message that success was possible if one had worked hard and since one did not make effort, he cannot necessarily be counted as a failure. So the boys will use laddism to express their masculinity and at the same time protect their self-worth (Jackson, 2002).

To educators, it is important to understand the culture of masculinity among boys and how it affects their learning. What boys believe about masculinity influence how far they will commit themselves to school activities, their attitudes to teachers, teaching methods, subjects, and what they regard as “real” class work and subjects.

In considering the masculinity of boys it must be born in mind that there are multiple versions of masculinities (Weaver- Hightower, 2003). Therefore, boys cannot be viewed through one form of masculinity. All the different types of masculinities in different contexts strive for dominance. Masculinities change over time as they are socially and historically constructed. However not all boys possess the dominant masculinity, others adopt non aggressive forms.

For boys real work constitutes written work, activity that is product oriented and real subjects are sciences and mathematics (Askew & Ross, 1988). Discussion methods are generally looked down upon by boys.

2.4.1.2 Attitude of Boys towards School

Some boys find school boring and feel that it is a waste of time to be in class, therefore put little effort in school work resulting in achieving low grades. They do not appreciate education and think that education does nothing for them and are more concerned with finding a good job after school (Rayment, 2006). Lack

of interest in school among boys indicates that they are psychologically disengaged from school even though they still go to school (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Dew, 2007). Finally the lack of interest in school drives them to drop out.

2.4.1.3 Disabilities

Having some form of disability whether it is physical, emotional or behavioral increases the chances of dropping out of school for learners (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Dew, 2007) The American Psychological Association (2010) includes speech and language impairment to disabilities that contribute to dropping out of school. Boys are said to be more likely to be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Timimi, 2005). This is a condition that is usually diagnosed in children and young people whose behavior appears impulsive, overactive and/or inattentive, experience mood swings, disruptive behavior which is a threat to their social and educational success (Reason & Sharp, 1997; Timimi, 2005; Rayment, 2006). A learner who is diagnosed with ADHD usually has difficulty to concentrate on school work and the behavior is a challenge to teachers (Sax, 2007). However, Timimi (2005) is of the opinion that some of the behavioral problems that are diagnosed as ADHD are due to psychological causes in the families of the learners and not medical conditions. Sometimes boys may be wrongly diagnosed with ADHD, for instance gifted learners who are very active, have problems paying attention, and difficulties

complying with rules and persistence (James, 2007). The epidemic of ADHD has been reported in Australia, U.S.A and the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, ADHD is seen as a psychosocial problem whereas in the U.S.A it is viewed as a medical problem (Reid & Magg, 1997).

Dyslexia is one other major learning disability which involves reading. Boys suffering from this condition experience difficulties with reading, understanding information in written form, reading aloud, a learner may take a long time to read short passages, or may write letters and numbers the wrong way (Rayment, 2006). Boys are more likely to suffer from dyslexia (James, 2007; Rayment, 2006). This learning disability can frustrate learners and cause them to have a low sense of self-esteem leading to loss of interest in learning. Other disabilities include dysgraphia and dyscalculia. While learners with dyslexia have problems with reading, learners suffering from dysgraphia have problems with writing, spellings, omitting words, illegible handwriting and so on (James, 2007). A learner with dyscalculia has problems making sense with numbers. The above mentioned disabilities may affect the progress of learning in boys.

2.4.1.4 Anti Social Behaviour

Boys are four times more likely than girls to have behavioral problems. Boys may be hostile to others, have problems accepting authority, have aggressive outbursts, or bully others (Rayment, 2006). Other behaviors include disobedience, swearing, damaging property, annoying others deliberately and

may feel that they are criticized and blamed (Rayment, 2006). Some boys exhibit delinquent behavior in school which contributes negatively to their schooling. Van Welzenis' (1997) findings reveal that boys who get bad results and have poor relations with teachers but have good relations with delinquent peers during leisure time are more likely to exhibit more delinquent behavior. Delinquent behavior has a negative impact on schooling. Sometimes boys may show their dissatisfaction of bad teaching and learning through disruptive behavior or through disaffection (Slade & Trent, 2000).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the concept of student engagement encompasses three components namely behavioral engagement, affective engagement and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). When learners are engaged in schooling they show by participating in academic, social or extracurricular activities at school. They also follow school rules, conform to classroom norms, participate during lessons, are attentive, ask questions and contribute in class. Of the three components in learner engagement, the behavioral dimension is more predictive of learner dropout from school (Eccles, 2004 and Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Misbehavior in school, therefore, indicates that a boy is at risk of dropping out of school because he is not fully engaged in learning. Suspensions, expulsion and other disciplinary problems due to misbehavior are factors that contribute to dropping

out of school (Hammond, et al., 2007). However, the students disengage psychologically first before the disengagement is displayed through behavior.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Smoking, alcohol and drug abuse is another problem facing boys. Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman & Schulenberg (2007) state that much of the substance use among the youth starts through learning from peers. Johnston, et al., (2007) explain that a person with friends who use drugs is more likely to try the drug, and that users are also more likely to make friends with other people who use drugs. A study conducted in the U.S.A by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2006) showed that poor academic performance among boys who abused alcohol, smoking and drugs. Poor academic performance leads to low motivation and loss of self-esteem, eventually to dropping out of school (Rumberger, 2001). If parents are sufficiently involved in the boys' education, they will monitor his activities and also supervise him. The problem of poor performance would be identified at an early stage and rectified. Then boys would not have to suffer low self esteem due to poor academic performance and eventually dropping out of school. Johnston, et al., (2007) highlighted that the most widely used illicit substances by secondary school learners was marijuana followed by inhalants such as glue. Other substances included hallucinogens, crack and heroin being the least used by secondary school learners.

2.4.2 School Factors and Dropping out of School

These are factors in the school or about education which contribute to boys dropping out of school. Sometimes school push out learner without knowing but in some instances schools take deliberate action to push out learners for instance through suspension or expulsion of a student.

2.4.2.1 Changes in Education

Sax (2005) identifies five major changes in the last thirty years in the education system in the United States of America that has contributed to boys' disengagement from school, namely the academically oriented kindergarten school which put pressure on children to learn material which in the past was learnt in the first grades of school. Today's kindergarten emphasizes writing and reading to get the boys and girls ready for grade one. Sax (2005, p. 96) points out that "... when emphasis in kindergarten is on reading and writing coupled with little unstructured and more developmentally appropriate activities boys tune out." This is so because boys are not ready for school at age five when they are enrolled for school. The result is that boys who experience difficulty with school at an early age often grow up with a negative attitude towards school and are likely to disengage from school.

The second factor is the elimination of the competitive aspect from schools since boys learn better in a competitive environment. This has been discouraged because it is said to create losers and learners with low self-esteem.

Next is the emphasis placed on book learning at the expense of experiential learning. Boys are also said to be too into video games though it serves as means of escape from reality and lastly the lack of male role models. All these factors are said to affect boys.

2.4.2.2 Bullying

School bullying is one of the most prevalent practice among learners. Boys are more likely than girls to be bullies and victims in school bullying (Saunders & Phyne, 2004; Beaty & Alexeyer, 2008). As bullies they may be involved in bullying as individuals or as groups. Bullying can be verbal or physical and or involve sexual harassment (Saunders & Phyne, 2004; Beaty & Alexeyer, 2008). While teachers and administrators are aware of physical bullying and have rules discouraging physical aggression there is cyber bullying which may take place on school premises or outside. This kind of bullying is difficult to detect and monitor unless the victim reports the case because it takes place on internet social sites. Boys use bullying to establish and maintain their status among other boys (Kimmel, 2009). They are under pressure to prove their masculinity and will do everything to raise and keep their status. Victims of bullying sometimes do drop out of schools because of the humiliation that they experience.

2.4.2.3 Teacher Expectations

Bridgeland, DiIulio and Morison's (2011) study show that the expectations that teachers have for their students have an effect on learners' performance and whether they will drop out of school. The learners who had dropped out in this study said that they found school to be boring because the learners had higher expectations of themselves while teachers set low standards for the learners. The learners felt that they were not challenged enough in class.

Sometimes teacher expectations of learners' performance are low for some boys. In a study by Auwarter and Aruguete (2008) boys from low socioeconomic backgrounds were less favorably rated than boys from high socioeconomic status. This affected how much effort the teacher put in helping boys who were not promising academically.

In Britain African-Caribbean boys are at the bottom of the class. They have a record of poor academic performance, are more likely to be excluded, and suspended than their white counterparts in America (Rollock, 1999). Due to stereotypes associated with the African-Caribbean males, teachers have negative attitudes and low expectations towards them.

2.4.2.4 School Practices and Processes

Excessive corporal punishment in schools can affect class attendance and learning among boys and girls. Learners may miss classes or decide to drop out of school because of excessive punishment. Dunne, Humphreys and Leach (2006) and Humphrey (2008) confirmed the practice of truancy in school among low achieving boys in response to excessive corporal punishment. Truancy sometimes leads to permanent dropping out of school. A study in Ghana by Ananga (2011) found that boys dropped out of school to avoid corporal punishment while most of the girls preferred to endure it.

2.4.2.5 The Classroom Practices and the Curriculum

Plank and De Luca (2008, p.345) point out the importance of the curriculum where a “course may represent an opportunity for inspired learning, establishing social connections, boredom or discouragement”. Sometimes learners drop out of school because of an irrelevant curriculum of which they see no connection between their aspirations and what the curriculum provides.

A study conducted by Slade and Trent (2000) in Australia at 61 secondary schools reveals that the declining rates of achievement and retention among boys was due to presence of ‘bad teachers’ and boring, repetitive and irrelevant school work. Work was boring because it comprised of theory, teaching and learning

which followed same procedures all the time. When school work is not challenging enough, and the content is irrelevant to their aspirations, boys disengage. Boys also prefer teaching and learning which involves interesting practical work (Askew & Ross, 1988; Slade & Trent, 2000). The kind of curriculum offered and what happens in the classroom are important because they determine whether learners will be engaged in schooling or will drop out. In the U.S.A, Bridgeland, DiIulio and Morison (2011) interviewed drop-outs on why they left school. The respondents described the classes to be uninteresting because teachers were not really engaged in their classes, also the lessons were teacher centred. In addition the teacher did not give opportunity to learners to be part of the lesson. The students therefore recommended improved teaching and curriculum to make learning more interesting and relevant and to have connection between what they learnt in school and the real world (Bridgeland, DiIulio & Morison, 2011).

Factors related to teachers and learning plays a vital role in student learning. Some of the factors that would help improve teaching and learning include the ability to convey ideas to learners in a clear and understandable ways, providing effective teaching environment, being enthusiastic, showing empathy towards students and creativity in classrooms (Verspoor, 2008). At the same time teachers with low morale are less likely to do their work with enthusiasm. There

are several factors that can cause teachers to lose interest in their work. Poor salaries and working conditions are some of the factors that demotivate teachers.

School leadership is an important aspect in student learning. Effective leadership increases effectiveness in teachers. School leadership can increase the effectiveness of teachers by observing teaching, providing guidance, and mentoring new teachers (Verspoor, 2008). This approach would help improve learning so that boys are not frustrated with ineffective teaching.

2.4.2.6 Stereotypical Beliefs about Boys

African-Caribbean boys are reported for their underachievement not only in Britain but also in America. They are reported for poor academic performance, high suspension and exclusions compared to white boys or other minority groups (Rollock, 1999). Stereotypical beliefs held by society about black males permeate school culture and influence teachers' beliefs and expectations of these black boys. Therefore, boys are likely not to be treated fairly as they deserve. Learners who feel that they are not appreciated by their benefactors tend to disengage from the lessons in class and may eventually drop out.

Auwarter and Aruguete (2008) conducted an experiment on the effect of students' socioeconomic background on teacher expectations in Central Missouri in the U.S.A. The results reveal that teachers had low expectations of boys from

low socioeconomic status and high expectations of boys from high socioeconomic status. Therefore, boys from low socioeconomic background are vulnerable to low teaching efforts from teachers.

2.5.3 Family Factors and Dropping out of School

The family background and the experiences in the home have a strong influence on whether a boy will complete his education or drop out of school. Some of the family factors that contribute to dropping out of school are:

- Low socioeconomic status
- High family mobility
- Low education level of parents
- Large number of siblings
- Not living with both natural parents
- Family disruption
- Low educational expectations
- Sibling has dropped out
- Low contact with school
- Lack of conversations about school

(Hammond, Linton, Smink & Drew, 2007)

2.5.3.1 Parental Education Level

Scott-Jones (2002) states that fathers or male family members who have more formal education than females are more likely to encourage boys than girls to complete their education. This suggests that the education of fathers or male members has an impact in the education of boys. A study conducted by Rankin and Aytac (2006) in Turkey also found that there was a link between the boys' and girls' education and parental education. Parents' attitudes, values, beliefs about education and their level of education influenced the education of their children. High rates of dropouts have been associated with low parental educational expectations (Hammond, et al., 2007). On the other hand high parental educational expectations inspired their children to higher educational attainments in high school and beyond (Patrikakou, 2004). Educated parents are more aware of the value of education therefore they encourage their children to get an education.

The cultural capital of the family has an influence on early school leaving among boys. Cultural capital is wealth in the form of knowledge; it includes attitudes, skills and values (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995). Beekhoven and Dekkers (2005) investigated the early school leaving among boys in the lower vocational track in secondary schools using large longitudinal studies. The frequency of reading books among parents was used to measure cultural capital in the families of boys who dropped out of school. The parents of boys who had dropped out of

school were found to read few books than the parents whose boys were still attending school. Furthermore, most boys who dropped out of school were from single-families. This finding showed that social capital as well as single families has an effect on early school leaving among the boys.

2.5.3.2 Child labor

In Namibia in rural areas boys are involved in labour having to work on the fields and are sent to cattle posts and this contributes to missing lessons and eventually in some cases dropping out of school (Amupolo, 2003). Among peasant families in Turkey, in some cases the use of child labour leads to self-employed fathers to withdraw sons from school to help in the family business (Rankin & Aytac, 2006). A study by Ananga (2011) found that in Ghana older boys between age 12-17 dropped out of school because of pressure to contribute to household income. They worked on the farms or went fishing to catch fish to sell. Generally often boys are employed to help in the agricultural tasks while girls are involved in household tasks. Boys are generally spared from doing household duties in many African cultures and this leaves them with having to lend help in farming activities.

2.5.4 Economic Hardships and Poverty

A survey of gender and education carried out by Silova and Magno (2004) in Eastern Europe and Russian Federation shows that due to economic hardships boys were pressured to leave school. Either they dropped out of school or parents

pulled them out to earn an income. Some boys leave to help on the family farms or with construction work.

The study conducted by Cardoso and Verner (2006) in the neighborhoods of Fortaleza in Brazil found that more boys than girls dropped out of school. School attendance was high for girls up to age 17. Attendance dropped to 80 percent at age 13 for boys then at age 17 school attendance dropped to 60 percent and decreased to 50 percent at age 18 (Cardoso & Verner, 2006). The attendance rate for boys dropped as they grew older. As for girls the attendance sharply dropped at age 18 from 80 percent to 55 percent. School abandonment in Cardoso and Verner's (2006) study was mainly attributed to extreme poverty and early parenthood. Direct and indirect costs of school were also implicated. Learners from poverty stricken environments are more likely to abandon school not only due to hunger but also due to less preparedness to learn and lack of fluency in the use of language when compared to classmates from wealthy neighborhoods (Vail, 2004).

Dunne and Leach (2005) in their study in some low performing schools in Ghana reported poverty, poor quality schooling and locally availability of job opportunities as a cause to more boys dropping out of school than girls. Boys dropped out of school to earn an income because of the locally available job opportunities.

Reducing the direct and indirect costs of school and early childhood development programmes, improved nutrition and health would help (Cardoso & Verner, 2006).

2.5.5 Peer Culture

In a longitudinal study involving 751 boys, Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz and Tremblay (2001) show that association with deviant friends or dropout friends leads to early school disengagement and that early disruptiveness in boys and academic difficulties lead to school dropout. Welhage, Ruttler, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez (1989) point out that peers encourage or discourage the desire to do school work, depending on what activities they engage outside school time. Since early disruptiveness and academic performance can predict dropping out of school, Vitaro et al. (2001) suggest early preventive measures aimed at reducing disruptive behavior and academic difficulties.

2.5.6 Wars and Conflicts

Some boys who are supposed to be in school are involved in armed conflicts. According to the Convention of the Rights of the Child armed groups that are separate from the state forces should not under any circumstances recruit persons under the age of 18 years (Hodgkins and Newell, 2007). States are responsible in ensuring that this is observed, however this rule is often breached during times of

conflict. Countries like Angola, Columbia, Liberia, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, have recruited children in armed forces (Sendabo, 2004). During conflicts more boys than girls are recruited in armed conflicts (Sendabo, 2004; Brett & Specht, 2004). War is a cause for both girls and boys to stop attending school because schools close during conflicts. During war times as well as in peaceful times some boys voluntarily drop out of school to join armed forces in order to earn an income. Sendabo (2004) and Brett and Specht (2004) report cases of boys who have dropped out of school and joined armed forces because they were expelled from school, did not like school, or the mistreatment by teachers, due to presence other push factors in the school, desire to take revenge for loss of a loved one, exerted peer pressure or being abducted.

2.5.7 Boys' Educational Needs

The educational needs of boys are discussed in literature. James (2007) reveals that there are cognitive, sensory, physical and social differences between boys and girls that educators should take into consideration in the classroom. According to James the cause of cognitive differences between boys and girls was not very clear whether it was due to the structure or function of the brain or a product of society. James (2007, p.22) further stated that “Whether boys and girls think differently because their brains are wired differently or because of societal expectations, they enter the classroom thinking differently and teachers have to

cope with the differences". Since the learners came to school with these differences, educators need to be aware of the differences so that they can employ suitable strategies in classrooms. Sax (2005) also highlights that there are differences in how boys and girls learn because the brains are wired differently and understanding different styles of learning is important. Sax (2005) suggests the recognition of the differences in how boys and girls develop and embracing gender-separate educational and sports opportunities for both boys and girl. Gurian (2005) provided insight into some of the needs of boys, for instance:

- Boys are inherently more stimulated by diagrams, pictures and objectives moving through space than monotony of words.
- Boys' brains are not well adapted on average to learning which emphasized reading, writing, and complex word making therefore heavy reliance on the techniques cause problems for many boys.
- It was important to provide learning environments that took into account the learning needs of boys, starting in preschools, kindergarten.

Gurian (2005, p.243) explains that under motivation in schools may be in any of the following areas of the boy' life:

- (i) The boy's brain itself (including biological and social changes at puberty).
- (ii) The school system, because of a particular school's ineffectiveness in teaching successfully.
- (iii) Family dynamics, especially if there has been family trauma such as divorce.

(iv) Other social stressors, such as poverty, malnutrition, peer pressure, violence.

In literature review these sources of undermotivation in boys have also caused some boys to drop out of school.

Neidlinger (2011) conducted a research into the unique needs of male learners and found that the learning process and activity levels of boys and girls were generally different. Boys were described as immature, fidgety, and outspoken while girls were generally described as co-operative furthermore, boys needed more physical outlets throughout the day than girls did (Neidlinger, 2011).

Learning in class depends on seeing and hearing. According to Sax (2005) boys unlike girls were prewired to be interested in moving objectives due to the sex differences in the anatomy of the eyes. As Neidlier (2011) stated, if a teacher was sedentary in class, boys would easily lose interest. Besides that, there was a difference in how boys and girls heard sound due to the structural difference of the ear in the two sexes. Girls hear better than boys (James, 2007 & Sax, 2005). The differences in hearing between the sexes have implication for classroom practice. When teaching boys the teacher will have to raise the voice or may take a step further by seating the boys in front and the girls at the back of the classroom (Sax, 2005).

2.5.8 Strategies to Minimize Boys' Dropout Rates

Causes and solutions to the problems affecting boys' education are complex and disputed. For example some advocate for single sex schools while others feel it does not need to be single sex education because the needs of both sexes may still be satisfied. Advocates for single sex schools argue that by separating the sexes then it becomes possible to meet the different styles of learning, interests and needs.

As boys are not the same and no one solution can be applied to all, several strategies have been implemented or suggested. Some solutions are research based while others are from personal experience or perceptions.

One of the suggestions is that boys need an educational environment that takes into an account their specific interests, and learning styles. In this line Gurian and Stevens (2005) suggest providing educational environment that is boy-friendly starting from preschool through to high school for instance by providing bright lights, more working space and learning material and teaching techniques which encourage boys to explore, be creative, question, and so on.

In several countries the concern that boys need successful male role models to mentor them has been echoed. The male role models may be teachers, fathers, close relatives or other males in the community. Whereas in the past decades raising children was a community responsibility and not a sole task for the family, Gurian and Stevens (2005) mention that in recent times other members of society such as the grandparents and uncles have become obsolete in helping

educate the young members of society. In order to help the boys in school, Gurian and Stevens advocate that parents should take a very active role to get family members, relatives and the community to participate actively in the education of boys. In New Zealand, Cushman (2008) investigated the role of male models and set to find out how principals defined role models and what they considered to be the attributes of a male role model for the boys. The study showed that most of the principals did not see the link between a strong role model and improved academic outcomes or behavior management skills. The call for male role models in teaching instead was rather a concern from society for the lack of adult male role models who may represent the dominant masculinities in that society (Cushman, 2008). However, the recommendation to involve more male role models in education is dismissed by other findings like of Bricheno and Thornton (2007), whose study shows that pupils do not see their teachers as role models. The majority in the study identified friends and relatives from their social environment as role models.

Martino, Lingard and Mills (2004) urge for research-based knowledge for teachers on how gender construction affects schooling for boys and girls. This recommendation follows an investigation they conducted in secondary schools in Australia.

Identifying the boys' and girls' separate educational needs and implementing policies and strategies that address the needs is another

solution. To improve achievement among boys, Zyngier (2009) points out the need for knowledge about how gender interacts with other factors and to identify which boys are disadvantaged since not all boys are disadvantaged. Rayment (2006) also points out the necessity of identifying the underachieving group, removing barriers likely to affect their progress and giving boys the opportunity to speak for themselves.

In Australia policies on gender equity have been written to incorporate boys' needs. More emphasis has been put on raising the status of the teaching profession so that more males may join and remain in the profession. Some course work which is thought to favor girls has been cut and more emphasis put on computer knowledge to help engage boys. In order to meet the educational needs of boys and to provide quality educational experiences, the Australian Federal parliamentary report recommends the following: identifying the boys' and girls' separate educational needs and implementing policies and strategies that address the needs; providing a relevant curricula and engaging pedagogy in promoting learning, accurate methods of assessing student achievement; enhancing literacy skills; getting equal numbers of males and females for teacher training; establishing positive student and teacher relationships; developing connection between schools and parents especially fathers, involving other males from the community as positive role models, and relevant high quality educational programmes and effective teaching. (House of

Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). The recommendations also included revising the policy framework on gender equity. However, these recommendations have been deemed falling short of the ultimate, because they omit the aspect of gender construction among boys and how it affects their schooling (Mills, Martino & Lingard, 2007).

Cappon (2011) highlights the following measures that were undertaken by the Australian government in addressing boys' needs: employed schools based approach to improving boys' education, by selecting schools where strategies on meeting boys' needs were developed and tested and the best practices recommended to other schools. Conferences were held where research-based information was shared and other issues on boys were identified and researched on. Funds for research on boys' education were also released by the government. Other programs targeted boys who were at risk and disadvantaged.

In Jamaica, the government implemented strategies such as involving fathers, making the curriculum more boy-friendly, giving boys more practical problems to solve, encouraging stricter discipline, keep lower streamed classes smaller, allowing boys to use computers when reluctant to read books (Timimi, 2005). This is to help boys stay in the education system and be interested in school.

Boys are said to prefer more action-oriented reading material rather than relationship-oriented material, competitive instead of cooperative classroom practices in class and prefer knowledge that is applicable to real-world situations. Boys also prefer teaching and learning which involves interesting practical work (Askew and Ross, 1988; Slade and Trent, 2000). By improving classroom practices it is hoped that boys will find school attractive and may be encouraged to stay on in school. Factors related to teaching and learning play a vital role in student learning. Other factors that would help improve teaching and learning include the ability to convey ideas in a clear and understandable ways, providing effective teaching environment, being enthusiastic, showing empathy towards students and creativity in classrooms (Verspoor, 2008).

Where teachers are prejudiced towards learners because of stereotyping, Rollock (1999) suggests schools should include a multicultural perspective, training programmes for teachers to make them aware and sensitive to the needs and backgrounds of the students. Furthermore, teachers and parents are encouraged to work together and recruit male teachers who will act as role models and mentors to the boys.

The study by Gray and Hackling (2009) shows that a supportive school culture which meets students' social, academic and aspirations contributes to quality retention and participation among students. The senior students participating in Gray and Hackings' study identified mutual respect (for their efforts, beliefs,

values, and backgrounds), and relationship with their teachers as important to a supportive school culture. Another critical factor to a supportive culture was 'responsibility'. Students wanted their teachers to go beyond telling them what they were going to learn and how, but to be given the privilege to be more active decision-makers in their learning (Gay & Hackling, 2009). This is necessary since sometimes students are in school but totally disengaged from learning (Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice & Tremblay, 2000). This category of learners also contributes to poor quality retention in schools. Hodgson (2007) explored early school leaving by investigating the cases of five boys who dropped out of school. The study concluded that schools through their structures and cultures contribute towards the withdrawal of learners from school therefore schools have a task of understanding how they contribute to the phenomenon and how they can intervene in early school leaving among the learners.

Hemming, Hill, Jin and Low (1998) investigated factors that influence senior students in deciding whether to stay or drop out of school and suggested helping the youths to cope with pressures from both the academic and social environment. Hemming et al. (1998) also suggested that the students should be helped to set their goals and be strengthened in their commitment to school.

Some of the weaknesses in the literature on boys' education include the disconnection between theoretically oriented work and the practice oriented work and also the transgender issue has not been addressed (Weaver-Hightower

(2003). There is a need to close this gap so that the accumulated knowledge on boys' education can be applied in the education sector thereby benefiting boys.

According to Cappon's (2011) evaluation of 'boy crisis' in education, attention on boy education should be on differences that exist within the groups of boys and girls because the gap between these two groups is not that wide. The most meaningful differences are those that exist among boys. Kimmel (2010) suggests focusing on the ideologies about masculinity as this determines how boys behave to a large extent.

Although several recommendations have been made, it is ones that are the result of research that will contribute most to the needs of boys. Research based solutions will most likely contribute more towards making education more interesting and increase retention among boys. Though researchers may obtain reasons from dropouts as to why they left school, it is difficult to obtain information on the processes that influence the decision just before a learner drops out of school (Rumberger, 2001).

2.6 Summary

Chapter two discussed the general trends in boys' education, the factors contributing to boys dropping out of school and some of the strategies that have been employed to help retain more boys in schools.

From the literature reviewed it is clear that the trend of more boys than girls dropping out of school is not unique to Namibia. Boys dropped out of school in different countries for different reasons such individual characteristics of the boys, family factors, peer culture, economic hardships and poverty, participating wars and conflicts and others. In North America, Australia and U.K the boy crisis is mainly about attendance, boys behaving badly and lagging in literacy, low graduation rates and under achievement. In these countries the growing concern for boys education has also led to much debate about the cause of the boy crisis and possible solutions. Several factors have been said to influence boy crisis such as feminization of education, the culture of masculinity among boys, economic changes, though there is no common agreement on the issue.

The solutions to the boy crisis as revealed in literature include providing single sex education, increasing male participation in the education of boys, promoting a supportive school culture to boys, advocating for research based school policies and practices, addressing the ideologies of masculinity and promoting more boy friendly type of education.

Though there are many issues confronting the boys in schools, the main concern of this study was school attendance among boys.

The next chapter (3) will discuss the methodology that was employed to collect and analyze data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a deep understanding of factors contributing to early school termination among boys in secondary schools in the Khomas Region. Besides providing a deep understanding, it was the intention to provide detailed description of the perceptions of the respondents and the lived experience of boys who dropped out of school. In this chapter the research design, methods of data collection and the analysis of data that were employed to help explain the phenomenon of boys dropping out of school are discussed.

3.2 Research Design

Johnson and Christensen (2004, p.275) define a research design as an “outline, plan or strategy you are going to use to seek an answer to your research question(s)”. This study used a qualitative case study approach. This was necessitated by the nature of the research objectives, the form of data that was required, the forms of data collection strategies employed and the need for in-depth discussion and understanding of the phenomenon of boys dropping out of school.

Furthermore, a qualitative research design was preferred to a quantitative survey because the statistical data from both the schools and the Ministry of Education was not good enough to base the study on it and yield reliable results. Schools do not have one standard of keeping their statistical data and the data is out of sequence.

Qualitative research is naturalistic in nature (Patton, 2002). Behavior is studied in its natural environment together with its context and no manipulation and control is applied to the subjects of a study as is the case in experimental quantitative research (Patton, 2002). The research on boys dropping out of school required that the researcher reach out to the boys who dropped out of secondary school, their teachers and principals, and boys that are currently in school. This enabled the researcher to investigate the cases in their natural settings and to help make sense of the situation.

Furthermore, this qualitative approach was appropriate for the study in that it was flexible and accommodated a range of methods for collecting data such as interviews and document analysis (De vos, 2002). Besides that as an emergent design, the qualitative approach has flexibility that allows the researcher to study the phenomenon as it unfolds naturally (Patton, 2002). As a result the researcher was able to adapt the inquiry as the situation changed in the field.

According to Shank (2006) it is a basic tenet of qualitative inquiry to seek deep understanding of the phenomenon and not building theories and generalizing knowledge. This study, therefore, was concerned with “understanding individuals’ perspectives of the world” and sought for insight into the factors that influence boys to drop out of school in the Khomas Region rather than statistical analysis (Bell, 1999, p.7).

The product of case study designs is a detailed and thick description of a case. In this study the focus of the research was the dropout of school boys in the Khomas Region.

3.3 Population

The population from which the data was collected consisted of secondary school teachers and principals, boys who dropped out of secondary schools, and boys in secondary schools and in the Khomas Region

3.4 Sampling

According to De Vos (2002, p. 199) a sample “comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study”. Shank and Brown (2007, p.46) describe it as a “subset of a population”. As it is not possible to

recruit everyone in the population to participate in the study, the researcher used qualitative purposeful sampling, to ensure that the sample comprised of information-rich respondents.

The following purposeful sampling strategies were employed to draw the sample: convenience sampling, stratified purposeful sampling and purposeful random sampling. Though more boys than girls drop out of school in other regions, the researcher investigated the phenomenon only in the Khomas Region where she is based (convenience sampling).

Term Dropout reports were examined at Khomas regional education office to identify schools (sites) with more boys that have dropped out of school from 2006 to 2009. The Ministry of Education only started keeping Term Dropout reports of learners who dropped out of school in 2006; therefore the researcher examined records beginning from 2006. According to the available data, eleven schools were identified as having most boy drop-outs. From the eleven schools, six schools with more learners who dropped out were selected as information rich sites for the study.

A pilot study was conducted at one of the six schools. Then the study was conducted at the five schools. Except for one school that was in a middle income area, the other four schools were located generally in low income suburbs. The

five schools comprised of two schools in Katutura, one school in each of the following suburbs: Eladorado, Hochland Park and Khomasdal. In this study the schools are referred to as School A, B, C, D and E in no respective order, for purposes of confidentiality.

The sample size was designed for a sample of thirty five individual respondents and five focus groups. The following stratified purposeful sub-samples were selected: five principals by virtue of their positions as managers of schools, five most experienced teachers, five focus groups of boys currently in school, one group per school and 25 boys who have dropped out of school (five boys who have dropped out per school). In the case of teachers, the researcher requested the principals of the school to identify longest serving teachers in the school who could provide reliable information.

Random sampling technique was used to select the sub-samples of boys. At each site a list of names of boys who dropped out of school for each year from 2006 to 2009 was compiled. From the lists, five boys per list were randomly selected to make a total of five boys for the site. The procedure was repeated to obtain five names at each site. The boys who have dropped out of school were selected to participate in the study because they are the key respondents that have lived the experience of dropping out of school. Out of five schools selected, two schools did not have records of the gender of the learners who had dropped out; from a

long list of candidates it became difficult to identify the boys from the list who had actually dropped out. Proceeding with this list would have meant that the researcher would not have been able to measure the intended variables for this study. In order to proceed with the research in these two schools the researcher approached heads of departments who provided information about boys who had dropped out of school.

Boys for the focus groups were also randomly selected from grade 9 and 11 (five boys per focus group of boys who are in school). The researcher compiled a list of the boys' names for each grade using class attendance registers. From each grade list, the researcher randomly selected names. A total of five boys from each grade (grades 9 and 11) comprised the focus group at each site. This group of boys provided information from their perspective as to why other boys dropped out of school.

3.5 Instruments

The researcher used document analysis and interviews as data collection instruments for this study. According to Patton (2002, p. 307) “document analysis ... provides a behind-the-scenes look at the [phenomenon] ... about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without leads provided through documents”. In order to obtain information that could help to

ask appropriate questions on the phenomenon the researcher reviewed relevant literature on the topic, then examined the following documents: Term Dropout reports at the Khomas Regional Education Office; dropout reports, Form C (document that a principal fills in for each learner that drops out of school). After indentifying the boys who dropped out of school, the researcher selected the names of boys to interview.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the respondents. This instrument was used because of its advantages. Through interviews a researcher can obtain "... a detailed picture of a participant's ... accounts of a particular topic" (De Vos, 2002, p. 302). Besides that the method is flexible, and the researcher is able to follow up areas of interest. The participants are also able to give a broader picture on the phenomenon. The disadvantage with interviews is that they consume a lot of time and information provided maybe distorted due to personal bias (Patton, 2002). To counteract the element of biasness from the respondents, the researcher spent more time in the field and also established rapport with respondents so that they could say what they meant and not what they think the researcher wanted to hear (Mushaandja, 2006).

As stated above document analysis and interviews combined together facilitate triangulation (cross-validation) (Patton, 2002). Using this method ensured that the different types of sources provided insights into the phenomenon (De Vos,

2002). The researcher compared what the respondents and document analysis revealed.

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted at one secondary school in the Khomas Region. No data for the main study was collected from the school to avoid contamination. The pilot study helped the researcher to ensure that the interview schedule is comprehensive and adequate to draw the expected responses. Questions that were not clear to the respondents were identified and rectified beforehand. For example, question 2 (Appendix G) initially read as ‘What keeps you in school?’ After pilot study it was revised to read as follows ‘You have not dropped out of school. What inspires you to continue with school?’ The question ‘What are the educational needs of boys?’ was revised to read “In your opinion do you think boys have certain educational needs?” (Appendix E, question 5). The question was revised because an interviewee commented that the question already assumed that boys had educational needs. To eliminate this impression, the researcher rephrased the question.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the University (Appendix A) to attach to the letter (Appendix B) to the Permanent Secretary requesting for permission to collect data in schools in the Khomas Region. The researcher secured permission (Appendix C) from the Permanent Secretary and wrote letters (Appendix D) to the principals to ask for permission to conduct research in their respective schools. Before going into the schools the interview schedules (Appendix E, F, G, H) were prepared and piloted.

The researcher made appointments with the principals. At each school, the researcher introduced herself to the principal; explaining the purpose of the visit and the nature of the study. Given the permission to conduct the study the researcher conducted document analysis and selected participants. Next, the researcher made appointments with respondents, briefed them on the nature of the study, its benefits, assured confidentiality and anonymity of their responses and established rapport with them. During interviews with individual respondents, the researcher first requested permission to video record the interview so that every detail could be captured. Some respondents agreed to have the interviews video recorded, but some were not comfortable, therefore the researcher only video recorded discussions where the respondent was agreeable. During the interviews the researcher asked questions and listened attentively, and

repeated important information to confirm what the respondent was saying. When necessary the researcher probed to get clarifications and also encouraged respondents to continue speaking. This ensured that the researcher obtained the data she was looking for and understood clearly what the respondents were saying. Though the interviews were captured by video camera the researcher wrote down the main points of the discussions.

After conducting interviews in the school, the researcher located boys who dropped out of school to secure interviews with them. Using student profiles in the school, the researcher located their residential addresses and telephone numbers where applicable. The interviews were also successfully conducted with five principals. With the fifth principal the researcher used the one-shot question approach. Patton (2002) advises that when the person to be interviewed is not available for the full interview because of the need to take care of an unexpected problem, the researcher should have a one-shot question to salvage some information. The researcher asks the main question to obtain vital information. A prior arrangement was made to interview the fifth principal. On the day of the interview the researcher was only given a brief moment to interview the principal despite an earlier arrangement. For that reason the researcher adopted Patton's one-shot question approach to obtain information from the principal in the little given time. Principals usually have busy schedules and this was the case with

this principal. He had to run off to attend to an unscheduled meeting. Further arrangements with the principal were unsuccessful because of his busy schedule.

When necessary the researcher returned to the field to obtain additional information and confirm the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis

The qualitative approach has an inductive orientation to data analysis. Analysis begins from specifics and builds towards general patterns and the researcher looks for relationships among the different dimensions in the data ((Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Patton, 2002). In this study the researcher used an inductive approach to data analysis to look for patterns and themes and relationships among different dimensions. Data analysis was an ongoing process from the beginning of data collection. This enabled the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the problem being investigated. Upon finishing, items were selected from the interview schedule that referred to issues on boys dropping out of school. The focus was on the causes of dropping out of school of boys, the educational needs of boys, barriers to learning among boys and possible solutions to the problem.

3.9 Summary

This study used a qualitative case study approach to investigate the problem of boys dropping out schools. This was necessitated by the nature of the research objectives, the kind of data that was required, the forms of data collection strategies required and the need for in-depth discussion and understanding of the phenomenon of boys dropping out of school. The population consisted of secondary school teachers and principals, boys who dropped out of secondary schools, and boys in secondary schools and in the Khomas Region. Purposeful sampling strategies were employed to draw the sample: convenience sampling, stratified purposeful sampling and purposeful random sampling. According to Patton (1990), in purposive sampling, subjects are selected because of some characteristic of interest to the researcher. Patton (1990) includes stratified purposeful sampling and random purposeful sampling under the purposeful sampling.

Document analysis and interviews were used as data collection instruments for this study. To look for patterns and themes and relationships in the data, the researcher used an inductive approach to data analysis.

The next chapter discusses the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the study that was conducted to find out factors that influenced more boys than girls to drop out of school. Education statistics indicate that on average more boys than girls were dropping out of school. The trend is consistent and likely to continue if no interventions are made. This phenomenon was investigated at five different schools (A, B, C, D and E) in the Khomas Region. The results are discussed below.

4.2 Causes of dropping out of school among boys

4.2.1 Results of the Focus Group Discussions

The literature reviewed in chapter 2 showed that there was no single factor why boys dropped out of school. Different circumstances in boys' lives contributed to dropping out of school. Similarly the five focus groups identified several factors which contributed towards boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region. The following factors were identified to cause boys to drop out of school: financial difficulties, peer pressure, alcohol, smoking and drug abuses, poor academic performance, lack of parental and academic support, absenteeism, lack of appreciation of education and bullying. There are other factors that were also mentioned though not much emphasis was placed on them, may be because

the factors were not an everyday occurrence; factors such as the death of a parent, imprisonment and impregnating another learner.

(a) Results of the Focus Group Discussions in school A

The focus group members in school A found that peer pressure, lack of appreciation of the value of education, consistent failing, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, laziness and distraction by girls when boys dated contributed to dropping out of school. The factors generally fell into two categories: peer pressure and individual characteristics of boys. Peer pressure for instance played a role in discouraging other boys when boys spent time with friends, smoked, used alcohol and drugs, hang out with dropouts or boys who were not interested in school.

The second category of factors involved personal reasons (individual characteristics of boys). These contributed to boys dropping out of school. For instance participants described the factors as follows:

- Some boys dropped out because they are lazy
- They (boys) don't know the importance of education or parents did not tell them
- Some are afraid of examinations because they did not prepare so they drop
- Some do not concentrate in school because they are dating and thinking about girls or they started smoking, drinking and doing drugs

The above responses showed that some of the boys who dropped out of school were responsible for their dropping out of school. Also they did not understand the value of education.

In order to find out closely what could be done to address the problem of boys dropping out of school, an understanding of what motivated boys in school was important. The focus group members shared their different sources of motivation. Some cited relations such as parents, friends and relatives as their source of motivation. The friends, parents or relatives encouraged them in one way or another to continue with education until they completed grade 12 and went to college or university. Others were motivated by the desire to improve the standards of living of their families and the desire to have a better future. Some of the statements given by the focus group members about the source of motivation are listed below:

... my parents and uncle help me with homework and to continue with school

...I know the importance of education I want to be someone in life. I know where I am coming from and going, we are poor

... my cousin went to university, I want to have a good job. Haters only make me strong

... I want to become like my father he is an accountant

... my parents and friends have positive influence in my life and I have a dream so I tell myself about it when I am getting discouraged.

Apparently, school teachers or the leadership were not cited as sources of motivation for their education. There could be many reasons for this, either the teachers used more negative reinforcement or there was not sufficient positive reinforcement on what was well done by the boys. Nonetheless, boys expected teachers and school leadership to provide encouragement and motivation.

The boys in the focus group said they expected teachers to:

- motivate the boys
- prepare lessons
- mark the books consistently
- show enthusiasm during lessons
- explain the lessons with clarity
- set extra classes for difficult subjects
- use English all the time as medium of instruction and not revert to using local language because not all learners understood the local languages.
- give more exercises for practice on a topic because it helped them to understand the subject better

Motivating learners encompasses more than verbal reinforcement it also includes meeting the realistic expectations of learners. In this situation the boys

expected teachers to be consistently punctual, have thought out lesson plans and make teaching and learning interesting. In a study by Bridgeland, DiIulio and Morison (2006) learners who had dropped out of school said that they did so because classes were boring and they found the subjects irrelevant to what they wanted to do in life. Also they found it boring because the teachers were not fully engaged in classes and did not adequately involve learners in the lesson. The respondents suggested several measures that would improve the chances of learners staying in secondary schools. They recommended teaching material which was more relevant to their lives, having better teachers who kept classes interesting, involved the learners in class and provided feedback (Bridgeland, DiIulio and Morison, 2006).

Some of the challenges that boys in the focus group experienced in their schooling included lack of feedback when the teachers did not mark class exercises, tests, or projects on the part of teachers regularly. They said the lack of feedback was discouraging especially after putting a lot of effort in the work.

The boys did not like it also when teachers skipped explanation in class following a request from a learner to repeat the explanation. The members in the focus group highlighted that the teachers often interpreted the request to mean that a learner was not paying attention while the teacher gave an explanation.

Boys in the focus group added that disruption in class during lessons was another challenge, if the teacher was not able to control the class. They also pointed out that corporal punishment was a challenge. In the place of corporal punishment they suggested that teachers should use other means of punishment like detention.

Peer pressure was cited as a challenge to learning because some of social attitudes that the boys assimilated from their friends worked against their interest in school. An example was when boys spent time with other boys who were not interested in school, they also did not feel like it. The boys said it was easier to bunk classes when it was done with friends than as an individual.

In order to improve the chances of boys staying in school, the members of the focus group had several suggestions. They suggested that teachers should stop using corporal punishment and instead should use other means of punishing such as detention after classes. They also felt that teachers should emphasise the importance of education to learners and help them to understand that education was a means to a better future. One participant suggested single sex education so that there would be little distraction between sexes through dating, and attention seeking. The focus group members added that teachers should advise boy about doubtful friendships and in some cases talk to the parents to help the boys. According to the finding of Hammond, Linton, Smink and Dew (2007) schools needed to do more to invite parents to the schools and be part of the

solutions to learners' problems, and that parents needed to do more themselves to be involved. The group also strongly felt that it would help if the school arranged meetings for male learners only, to discuss issues that affected boys both socially and academically.

(b) Results of the Focus Group Discussions in school B

In school B the participants identified peer pressure, family factors and individual factors (personal reasons of the boy) to contribute to dropping out of school. The influence of peer pressure was described follows:

... keeping company with wrong friends who are involved in smoking, drinking and hanging out in the streets.

... staying with wrong friends and doing what they think is cool for them like staying on the streets and not going to school ... smoking and drinking.

The family as a contributing factor in boys dropping out of school was expressed in terms of family disturbances, poverty and lack of support:

... they (boys) are having problems at home or hunger at home they do not eat in the morning.

... maybe they (boys) have personal problems at home and also hanging out with drop-outs in the locations.... parents should really see to it that learners are doing well because some of the parents are sending learners to school but they didn't ask what is wrong at school, how are you doing and are you performing. Like if we are given letters so that parents can go to the meetings they won't go to the meetings. At the end of the day the learners will feel like my parents don't even care about my school. I will also not care. Maybe you did a test and you bring it at home when you give them a test and say I did well they just look at the paper and put it away; they won't even say well done ... they don't encourage you.

The study by Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) revealed that most of the time parents were more active in supporting learners when there was a disciplinary case. Bridgeland et al., (2006) found that learners whose parents were not involved in school were more likely to drop out in the first two years of high school than those whose parents were involved even when they were not in trouble. Parental involvement was important not only in times of disciplinary cases but even when everything was fine.

Literature review in chapter 2, Tolmay (2005) reveals that sometimes boys abandon school mainly due to extreme poverty in the home. They leave school at an early age to become bread winners for their families. In Brazil, too, boys dropped out of school to get a job because of poverty at home (Cardoso and

Verner, 2006). A study by Ananga (2011) in Ghana, shows that some primary school boys dropped out of school to find employment because of poverty at home. They wanted pocket money and also to supplement the family income.

In addition to peer pressure and family factors, the participants pointed out that sometimes boys caused their own dropping out of school. This factor was mentioned in school A too. According to participants this was the case when for instance boys had not interest in school, did not believe in their academic ability, lost hope because of failing and engaged in activities like smoking and alcohol abuse. One participant explained that some boys stayed on the street and did not go to school instead they copied other boys on the street who smoked and drank.

According the American Psychological Association (2010) it was important to take into consideration the learners' belief in their academic abilities and motivation to succeed in school. When learners felt that they did not have capability to do well in some academic activities they tended to lose appreciation of those subjects and put little or no effort in those areas (American Psychological Association, 2010). For these reasons parental involvement is crucial so that they can monitor the progress of their sons in schooling and also supervise them.

The sources of motivation for boys in school B were similar to those in school A. The majority of participants in this focus group were motivated by the desire

to help their families and to have a better future. For instance participants said they received encouragement from relations such parents, friends and relatives. One participant said he was motivated with school because he was doing well and felt good about it. The opposite is true, boys who do not do well in school feel discouraged and have low sense of self-esteem. Low academic achievement is associated with high risk of dropping out of school (Hammond, et al., (2007; Rumberger, 2001; Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

Some of the statements about the sources of motivation for boys were:

I want to be educated and help my family one day.

...my mother now does not work and I have to look after my sister so I have to get education.

Only two brothers have finished school and the rest are at home so I want to finish school so that I can help my family.

I want to be successful. I want to look after my mother one day.

Again in school B the participants did not cite the school as a source of motivation for continuing with their education. Hence among their expectations the boys continued to mention the importance of teachers in giving motivation to the boys.

The boys in the focus group expected teachers to:

- motivate the boys

- be punctual for lessons
- to plan their lessons and use the time in class to effectively teach
- to give extra work or tasks because it helps boys to understand the subject more clearly
- be more interesting
- to teach in subjects of their training

Some of the challenges boys experienced in school B were bad influence from friends like in not doing homework. One respondent said if a boy in class said he was not going to do home work it looked cool and then you also decided not to do it because you convinced yourself that the teacher would not do anything since there are two of you. Another respondent said that sometimes it was a challenge when other learners were not happy with him because he was consistently doing well. He said it disturbed him because he was under pressure whether to stop working hard so that he could please his friends or continue to withstand being discriminated. Peer pressure was a major challenge to learning as identified by this group.

In order to encourage boys to stay in school till the boys completed their education, members of the focus group suggested that teachers should talk to parents or to the boy before they dropped out of school. In a survey conducted by Bridgeland, et al., (2006) the respondents said that one of the keys to

keeping students in school was to have communication between parents and the school and increasing their involvement in their child's education. The respondents further suggested that schools and teachers strengthen their communication with parents and work with them to ensure students show up and completed their work (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Many times parents became more involved in the education of their children when the child had a disciplinary case that required parents' participation or when the child was at the verge of dropping out of school.

The focus group also suggested that teachers should stop using corporal punishment instead should use other means such as detention after classes. In Namibia corporal punishment was outlawed in 1991 by the Namibian Supreme Court. It was declared that corporal punishment breached article 8(2) (b) of the Constitution: "No persons shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punish (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990). Despite this declaration some schools still practiced corporal punishment. This practice not only inflicted pain to learners but also instilled fear and resentment in them and was detrimental to a good learning environment.

The focus group also placed emphasis on the need for teachers to remind boys of the importance of education and to help boys to understand that education was a means to a better future. One member suggested single sex education so

that there were few distractions between sexes through dating, and attention seeking. Another member recommended feeding programs in schools to help learners who went to school without food in the morning. A third participant added that sometimes the problem was not lack of food. He said that some boys dropped out of school because at home none of the siblings went far in education therefore were not motivated with education.

The discussion group strongly felt that it would help also if the school arranged meetings for male learners to discuss issues that affected them both socially and academically. In order to help the boys, schools should provide opportunity for boys' voice to be heard in the matter since they are the ones who are living the experience.

(c) Results of Focus Group Discussion in School C

According to members of this focus group some boys dropped out of school due to family factors, peer pressure, academic performance and individual characteristics of boys.

Family factors: The participants pointed out that sometimes learners dropped out of school because of poverty related factors in the home. They said some boys come from home with low income and parents cannot afford to pay for their education. That forced boys to drop out of school. Lack of parental support in terms of giving encouragement and supervision of the boys was another home factor attributed to boys dropping out of school. One participant

said that some parents were not available to support the boys in their education and the boys attached themselves to relatives who spent most of the time drinking alcohol. In the long run the boys joined them in beer drinking. He added that beer was not suitable for learners because they lost concentration in class and this contributed to failing and dropping out of school. Boys are initiated to smoking, drinking alcohol and drug abuse because of friends, parents and relatives who used the substances (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman and Schulenberg, 2006).

Peer pressure was identified as a factor to dropping out of school. The focus group participants in this school as well as in schools A and B mentioned this factor. The participants in school C explained that friends who were not motivated with school and were involved in illegal activities like smoking, drinking alcohol and using drugs distracted other boys from concentrating in school. The result was that some boys lagged behind in school and when they failed to catch up with school work they became discouraged and gave up.

Poor performance in school was cited as a contributing factor to dropping out of school. One participant said that if a boy was consistently failing in class he became discouraged and did not see the need for continuing with education because their efforts were not being rewarded. He added that “failing made you feel hopeless” and that this was all it took to make the decision to drop out of school.

Another contribution was by the focus group was that some boys dropped out of school because of personal reasons such as impregnating another learner. When a boy impregnated a learner he was sent away from school to take up the duties of fatherhood but some did not return to school again. In this situation the cause of dropping out of school was attributed to boy. Besides impregnating a learner, alcoholism was also cited to be a factor in boys dropping out of school. Burkholder (2008) states that substance abuse such as tobacco, alcohol and drug problems often preceded academic problems. Some of the problems associated with substance abuse are: low grades, higher truancy, low expectations and dropping out (Burkholder, 2008).

The participants expected the teachers to make learning interesting and to facilitate an atmosphere which was conducive to learning. This meant ensuring that there was less noise in class and no distraction by cell phones or unnecessary talking. The boys talked about noisemaking in class, playing with cell phones and girls distracting the attention of boys because they were wearing short dresses. Generally schools do not permit the use of cell phone in class but learners always bring in their phones and text or play games.

They also expected the teachers to have the ability to explain the topic clearly. They expressed the importance of class exercises, projects and tests saying that it helped them to grasp the subject matter, revise, assess if they understood what

they learnt and to prepare for upcoming tests. These expectations were also mentioned by other focus groups in school A and B.

In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school, the focus group stressed the need for active participation by teachers and parents in the lives of boys.

They suggested the following actions:

- Encourage learners by stressing the importance of education.
- Encourage parental participation in the education of boys
- Teachers be attractive to learners by being friendly and enthusiastic with teaching.
- Identifying boys who were discouraged with school and motivating them.

(d) Results of the of Focus Group in School D

The major factors contributing to dropping out of school as identified by the focus group were financial difficulties, peer pressure, bad behaviour, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and aspirations not met by the school curriculum. Financial difficulties- One participant narrated how he struggled financially every year. He explained that he was forced to drop out of school to find a job so that he could generate money for school fees. In 2009, he said, he withdrew from school to find a job in order to raise money for school fees. He returned to school

2010 when he had raised enough money. He explained that his uncle used to pay for his school but when he died he had to help himself. The family's poor background made it difficult for the mother to support him financially.

Half of the participants were convinced of the role of peer pressure in dropping out of school. They gave an example of boys who preferred to spend more time playing music or drinking alcohol with friends instead of studying or doing homework.

Bad behavior was cited in dropping out of school. Participants felt that some boys dropped out of school due to bad behavior such as committing serious offenses, breaking school rules, being rebellious, smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse which resulted in them being suspended or expelled or lagging in school work.

Two participants believed that some boys dropped out because they wanted to follow careers which were not provided for by the school curriculum such as careers in music. The boys who pursued careers in music felt that music would give them a fast income unlike education whose benefits would be realized later. Boys in this focus group were mostly motivated to continue with education by the desire to help their families and the prospect of a better future:

-I want to get an education because education is important, many people who are educated are in companies.

-When I finish school I will get a good job and will be happy with my family.

-My family is poor I want to help my family.

-Without education you are nothing, I want to provide for the family

-School is important to help your small brothers and family.

-To get a job and be able to support myself

The participants expected the teachers to provide guidance and be able to explain the lessons in class. They also expected good communication between the teachers and learners. It was a challenge to boys if others in class were improving their class performance while they were failing.

To prevent boys from dropping out of school the participants recommended that a principal should address learners and encourage the boys during school assembly. They said teachers should encourage boys and give boys advice for instance to stay away from bad behaviour and the bad influence of friends. They added that school administration should also help orphans and those boys came from poor family background.

(e) The Results of the Focus Group in School E

The causes of dropping out of school among boys were mostly ascribed to peer pressure, factors to do with the boy himself (individual characteristics) and

family factors. Friends were a factor in boys' activities like hanging out with drop-outs. One respondent expressed this point in the following words:

The boys drop out because of staying with friends that do not attend school and they tell him why do you attend school. Even if you finish you are not going to find a job.

While friends contributed to dropping out of school among boys, the participants said that sometimes the boys were responsible for their dropping out of school. The participants said boys dropped out of school due to bad behaviour and lack of appreciation of the value of school. The lack of appreciation of education was expressed by a participant in the following statement:

Some boys think they have everything, they think they have no need for school.

The pressure on the part of boys to help in the family had also led to dropping out of school, for instance a participant said:

Some boys drop out because they feel the responsibility of taking care of their family because they feel they are old enough they are grown up men.

The participants added that failing in school also contributed to dropping out. A participant described this factor as follows:

Some are dropping out of school because they are failing they (boy at risk) are saying there is no use of going to school and they feel they do not benefit.

Some friends are passing but he is not passing

Family background also contributed to dropping out of school among boys. The participants cited family events such the death of a parents and sometimes relatives refused to accommodate the orphans. Family financial difficulties were another factor in dropping out of school. The members in the focus group said boys dropped out when parents could not afford to pay school fees or buy school materials like uniforms or books.

Like boys in other focus groups, boys in this focus group were also motivated to continue with education by the desire for a better future and to help their parents. As in other focus group discussions, school teachers were not cited as a source of motivation.

A lot of emphasis was placed on the need for mutual respect between teachers and boys were expressed in this group:

... respecting learners' views and not shouting.

... not to think of us things but motivate us.

... we want to be respected.

The participants also pointed out that they expected teachers to encourage the boys and not give up on them. They also talked against use of corporal punishment and suggested the use of other methods of punishment that were not physical. This factor was mentioned in three focus groups.

In this school, it appeared that bullying was common and the participants described it a challenge. They said that in some cases a boy would stay away from school just to avoid being bullied. An investigation conducted on the effects of bullying and absenteeism in high schools in Ghana found that boys who experienced physical and psychological bullying had unexcused absences from school than those who were not bullied (Dunne, Bosumtwi-Sam, Sabates and Owusu, 2010).

To prevent boys from dropping out of school they suggested that bullying should be minimized in the school and that boys should be re-educated about the effects of substance abuse in order to discourage smoking, alcohol and drug abuse among boys. According to focus group members smoking, alcohol and drug abuse contributed to bunking classes and eventually dropping out of school.

The participants said that more practical worksheets, projects and tests would contribute towards motivating them, concentrating in school and keeping them away from bad behaviour. They explained that when they are given little work, there was no motivation. Generally all the focus groups mentioned the need for

more school work of this type. In their subject choices there was no clear gender preferences, probably this would show in very large sample.

Main Factors Identified by the Focus Groups

The five focus groups discussions identified several major factors contributing towards boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region as discussed below.

(a) Financial difficulties

The socioeconomic status can affect a learner in a positive or negative way. The discussions of the focus groups in three schools (school, C, D and E) revealed that some boys coming from families with low household income dropped out of school due to financial problems. The boys said that this happened because sometimes parents or guardians were not able to support the boys because the family did not have enough money to pay for the boys' schooling as such the learners were forced to drop out of school.

However, there are times when boys drop out of school completely or temporarily for various reasons. In this study the researcher came across a case where a 20-year old boy at school D had been compelled to withdrawal from school a few times due to financial difficulties. He explained that he was forced to drop out of school to find a job so that he could generate money for school

fees. In 2009, he said, he withdrew from school to find a job in order to raise money for school fees. He returned to school 2010 when he had raised enough money. He explained that his uncle used to pay for his school but when he died he had to help himself. The family's poor background made it difficult for the mother to support him financially.

Olatunji (2005) examined the effects of work experience on early high school leaving among Mexican adolescents who attended school and worked at the same time. The results indicate that early work intensity among high school learners increased the chances of the learner dropping out of school. Whether it is out of necessity or not, when a learner engaged in work, the chance of dropping out of school increased.

In general, school fees are lower at primary level but increase at secondary level, therefore most parents can afford to provide primary education to their children but it becomes more demanding as learners advance to secondary school. The costs include school fees, textbooks, uniforms, transport to school and other school items.

(b) Peer influence

Peer influence was mentioned in all the five focus groups (in schools A, B, C, D and E) as a factor to dropping out of school among boys. The members in the focus groups cited wrong choices of friends such as associating with boys who had dropped out of school or with friends who did not value education. The wrong influence of friends was also cited in activities such as absconding classes, participating in drug and alcohol abuse and smoking.

Peer influence can be positive or negative. Ream and Rumberger (2008, p.111) explain that “high achieving friends may increase one’s likelihood of completing high school whereas having friends who have dropped out of school increases one’s chances of not completing school”. The American Psychological Association (2010) also confirms that peer influence has an important effect on academic outcomes by either promoting or undermining academic achievement through the beliefs of the groups. The example given is that through social disapproval toward school work some students to drop out of school. Since young people have a need for acceptance by other peers, this need drives them to identify with peers who they admire and whose approval they desire. In order to feel part of a particular group a learner takes part in the group activities, which may be good or bad. The participants in the focus group said that some boys

participated in the dubious activities in order to feel accepted or “look cool” with others.

(c) Smoking, Alcohol and Drug abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse were mentioned as other causes of dropping out of school among boys. Generally, alcohol abuse is prevalent in the some communities and this may in some way be contributing to the trend seen among boys especially. Boys who have friends or parents who use the substance or if the boys can easily access the substances then they start using them. Boys commonly take risks and use alcohol or drugs in order to “look cool” or get a thrill. During the interviews, members of the focus groups said that these practices were common among their peers and that it was usually accompanied with smoking.

The use of these substances impairs the mental capabilities of the user. In the case of learners, they lose concentration in class. This practice makes the concerned learner to lag behind in school work. The result of lagging behind in school work is dropping out of school because he cannot cope with studies. If parents are sufficiently involved in the boys’ education, they will monitor his activities and also supervise him. The problem of poor performance would be identified at an early stage and rectified. Then boys would not have to suffer low

self esteem due to poor academic performance and eventually dropping out of school.

A study undertaken in the U.S.A by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2006) showed poor academic performance among school boys who abused alcohol, smoking and drugs. The most common substances boys smoked were cigarettes and marijuana. Besides the two substances boys were exposed to inhalants like household glues and illicit drugs like crack, cocaine. It is a concern when boys are involved in substance abuse because of its affect on their academic performance and consequently their health and future.

(d) Poor academic performance

In two of the five focus groups (school C and E) discussions, persistent failure was pointed out as a cause for dropping out of school. The focus group members believed that boys who often obtained low grades or failed subjects were more likely to drop out of school. At one of the secondary schools (school D) that participated in this study, the academic records of most of the learners that had dropped out of school (a total of 52) were weak. Ream and Rumberger, (2008) explain that early failure in school weakens self confidence and may result in the learner dropping out of school. One participant at school C described the impact of failure in the following words “failing makes you feel hopeless.”

(e) Parental academic support

The boys in the focus groups (at school B, C, D) attributed dropping out of school to lack of support from parents, which resulted in low motivation for boys. Apparently, the most effective way for parents to help learners is to academically support their children by communicating to them their expectations, speaking about their potential, discussing learning strategies, encouraging career aspirations and talking about college education (Niece, 2010).

(f) Absenteeism

High absenteeism was reported by all the focus groups as a factor in dropping out of school. After missing several lessons, the boys said, a learner realizes that he is behind in many lessons, the grades drop, and then he loses hope of catching up. At that point the boy drops from school.

(g) Not valuing education

To some boys education does not mean much, therefore, they do not attach value to it. Their interest is in other activities such as music. Here are some of the reasons given by some participants on why some of the boys do not value education:

- They do not know the importance of school, because their parents are not telling them about school (school A)
- They do not value school because they want to be musicians (school D)

- Some boys think they have everything, because their parents are rich, they feel they have no need for school. (school E)
- preferring gang activities or sports to school

Several cases are shared by Brent and Specht (2004) of young people who have dropped out of school because of lack of interest in education and instead joined organizations like armed forces.

There is a link between education and one's future career. When education is viewed as unlikely to lead to employment or contribute to attaining one's career it becomes irrelevant to many young people and are likely to drop out (Brent and Specht, 2004). Similar observations were made by American Psychological Association (2010) in the U.S.A. According to American Psychological Association (2010) observations, certain categories of drop-outs emerged in secondary schools which may have their beginnings in primary school. One of them is called the 'fade out'. In this category the learners dropped out of school simply because they were frustrated and bored although they did not repeat a grade or failed a grade.

(h) Bullying

Instances of bullying through teasing were brought up in some of the group discussions (School A and E). Boys felt strongly against this practice. They said it was humiliating and some who could not take it preferred to miss lessons or even drop out completely. Bullying has also an emotional stress on boys, who

feel helpless to solve the problem. The emotional stress has a negative impact on academic performance.

Other factors

Other factors were raised in the discussions though they were not given the same prominence as the factors that have been mentioned above. These are: the effect of the death of a parent; court cases and imprisonment; compromised belief in oneself (self concept); involvement in stealing; irresponsibility; impregnating another learner, distraction by girls through their attention and dressing.

The death of a parent has a devastating effect on a child, emotionally as well as financially. In the event of the death of a parent or parents, boys in the focus group associated dropping out of school more to loss of financial support than to emotional trauma. They explained that often boys drop out due to lack of finances when the only parent who was supporting them passes away.

Court cases and imprisonment were cited also as contributing factors to dropping out. Boys gave examples such as involvement in theft or assault as common cases that have landed some learners in prison. Groenwald (2000) conducted a study on crime in Rehoboth involving school going youth and found out that boys who had committed offenses were forced to miss classes to attend to court cases and in some cases dropped out completely to serve their sentences.

Impregnating another learner was raised though not many participants dwelt on the fact. According to the regulations from the Ministry of Education when a boy impregnates a girl, he is supposed to withdraw from school too to take responsibilities of fatherhood and may return to the same school or another of his choice (Ministry of Education, 2009). Sometimes these boys never return school to continue their education.

Distraction from school because of girls was mentioned in one focus group but it was not given much significance by other participants as a cause for dropping out of school. However, it was generally agreed that sometimes boys spent much of their attention on girls than on school work and this affected their performance.

Ampiah and Adu Yeboah (2009) reaffirm that in developing countries poverty, death of parent, poor performance in school, parental lack of interest in formal education, distance to school, corporal punishment, poor attendance and repeating grades contribute to dropping out of school. These factors were brought in the discussions as contributing to dropping out of school.

In all the five focus group discussions boys expected good teaching and class management. It was important to them that a teacher should be able to explain the topic clearly and teach it in an interesting manner. A teacher could do this by adequately planning the lessons in advance, setting clear goals, revisiting the previous lesson and by having interesting activities which helped the learners to

process and understand the material. The teacher had a responsibility in creating an environment that was conducive to learning.

Boys expressed preference for practical and activity based learning. They justified this method of learning as effective for purposes of revision, understanding the subject and concentrating on school work. The study by Bridgeland et al. (2006) revealed that some students dropped out of school because school work lacked challenge to keep them motivated and teachers had low expectations for their student.

In order to effectively help boys, the focus groups suggested that teachers and school leadership should hold meetings with boys. They explained that by this means the school administration would learn about the issues that affect boys in and outside school.

Parental involvement in preventing boys from dropping out of school was emphasised by the focus groups. According to the focus group members this approach would encourage boys to be on their good behaviour and to work hard.

In all the five focus groups most of the participants referred to their desire for a better future and the need to help their families. This was their source of motivation. Here is what some of the boys said:

“...want to be someone in future...” (School A)

“...only two brothers have finished school and the rest are at home

So I want to finish school so I can help my family.” (School B)

“... because my mother now doesn’t work and I have to look after my sister so I have to get education.” (School B)

“...you are not motivated because sometimes you see parents suffering.” (School C)

“... because of poverty then you are encouraged.” (School C)

“... to get a job, certificate and to be able to support yourself.” (School D)

“... to provide for the family” (School D)

“...you study hard to be someone one day.” (School E)

“...actually it is my parents and the results of finishing school and going after the career I have chosen.” (School E)

Other members of the focus groups were motivated by other factors such as wanting to be as successful like some of their relatives or someone they know. They also wanted to set an example to siblings or in some cases parents encouraged them. Household contexts was also plays a role in causing boys to drop out of school. For example participants said some boys had no role models in their homes like older siblings who had completed secondary education. Either the siblings never went to school or some of them dropped out of school therefore the one in school was not inspired to continue his education.

Apparently the participants did not identify themselves with school as a source of motivation. This implied that schools must be in the forefront to encourage learners in the pursuit of education.

Boys’ Expectations of Teachers:

The five focus group discussions came up with a series of boys' expectations of their teachers. They expect:

- Punctuality for lessons, adequate preparation for lessons, clear explanations during teaching and learning
- Friendliness, sense of humor, and teaching with life and energy in class
- Good student-teacher communication and respect
- Teachers to provide guidance and motivation
- Providing a good learning environment in class (less disruptions)
- Be trained in the subject they are teaching and be knowledgeable
- Help boys understand the lessons
- Give more class exercises, projects, tests (practical work) and extra lessons for difficult subjects

Some of these expectations are similar to those identified by boys' in a study conducted by Trent and Slade (2002). In this study among others, boys described a good teacher as one who respected the student as person, was friendly, explained the work and made the class interesting.

Several challenges were identified:

- Discrimination by friends for performing better than others on a consistent basis in class.
- Some teachers being disrespectful.

- Corporal punishment in some schools though it is outlawed.
- Peer pressure e.g. it contributed to not doing home work.
- Lack of vocational subjects in some instances as not all boys are good at academic work.
- Disruptions in class due to friends talking in class, playing with cell phones, and sometimes the manner of conduct among girls.
- Teacher skipping explanations when asked to repeat the explanations
- Teacher using both local and English language as medium of instruction when some learners did not understand the local language, thereby missing out on explanations.
- Teachers not marking learners' work sometimes.
- Bullying.
- Other learners doing fine materially while others are not as privileged e.g. some learners drive cars to school while one boy rides a bicycle to school for long distance every day.
- Learners finding gates closed due to late coming.

4.2.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Causes of Dropping out of School Among Boys

During this research, the views from the teachers were also solicited in order to tally responses by learners to those of their teachers.

Teachers' Contribution by School.

(a) Responses of Teacher Z at school A

In this school I interviewed Teacher Z, a female with a grade 12 qualifications and a Bachelor of Education. She had served as head of department before and at the time of research she had been serving in this school for the past five years.

The teacher Z at school A was of the opinion that some boys drop out of school because of lack of interest in gaining an education. She recalled a case of three boys who according to her left school due to lack of interest in school. This factor was also mentioned several times in focus group discussions by boys. In a study conducted by Ingrid (2002) in Australia, some of the boys who dropped out gave a similar reason for dropping out of school.

Teacher Z, however, was careful to mention that it was difficult often to know the real reasons a learner dropped out because often learners did not give reasons for dropping out, they just stopped attending lessons and parents or guardians did not inform the school about the status of the boy.

Sometimes the school was forced to discharge a learner because of serious offenses that involved breaking school rules. She gave an example of two cases of boys who left school because they were expelled. The first case happened in 2008, where a boy was expelled because he stole the key to the school safe. The second incident took place in 2009, in which a boy was expelled for involvement in a rape of a female learner. The teacher explained that the actions of the two

boys were serious offenses against school rules and learners guilty of serious offenses were expelled.

Teacher Z further revealed that some boys in the school were involved in gangster activities and that increased the likelihood of dropping out. She gave an example of the existence of an eight Hockland Park group of boys in the school who engaged in fights with rival gang members. She said often gang members lived in fear of being harassed by members of a rival group. They were afraid of falling victims to rival members either on their way to or from school. When it was too risky going to school they skipped classes and lagged behind in school work. Finally they would drop out if the gang activities interfered too much in their lives.

The gangs formed by the youth are usually different from hard core drug dealers or syndicates. Normally the youth were involved in fighting, stealing from one another and making threats to one another.

For boys who dropped out in this school nothing was done to reclaim them because when they drop out, the school was unaware of their decision to discontinue with school and would only realize the boys had dropped out after a long period of not attending school.

The usual obstacles to schooling for boys as reported by the teacher were peer pressure, alcohol and drug abuse. According to the teacher these factors affected

some boys in their education. Besides that, the teacher said boys were often culprits in not doing their work while girls did their work almost always.

Asked whether it mattered if boys were taught by female or male teacher, teacher Z did not think that it made any difference whether boys were taught by a female or male teacher. However she emphasized the importance of parental involvement in the school life of boys because most often boys did not have their work done. She was of the opinion that parental participation would ensure that the work of boys was closely monitored.

According to the teacher, not all teachers were aware of the needs of boys. She said that most of the time attention to boys was in the form of complaining about a problem boy. The concern was more of girls because of the fear that a girl can be pregnant or raped but with boys it was not the case.

Some of the challenges teachers faced from boys included stubbornness and being threatened. Usually teachers handled these cases but when they were out of hand they referred the cases to the principal. To prevent dropping out of school, the teacher suggested motivation talks and involving parents. She added that during the interview she realized that teachers were not much alert to the needs of boys as they are to those of girls.

(b) Responses of Teacher X at school B

Teacher X was a Head of Department of mathematics and science in the school. She had 11 years of teaching experience and had been in this school for 3 years. She was a qualified teacher with a grade 12 and a Bachelor of Education and continuing with a Masters in Education. With so many years of teaching she was a rich source of information.

Teacher X identified gangsterism as a factor which contributed to dropping out of school among boys. The teacher explained that some boys in the school belonged to gangs. She added that boys who were members of gangs engaged in fights and forcefully took items like cell phones from rival gang members. Fear of other gang members was mentioned again. The teacher explained that boys who were members lived in fear of being hurt at school or on the way home. They felt unsafe and tended to hide from other gang members or dropped out of school.

Lack of sufficient parental support towards school was cited by the teacher, as another cause of dropping out of school among boys. Masitsa (2008) explains that learners who have no parental encouragement and support or who do not have parents or guardians are deprived of this support. The lack of support usually resulted in diminished motivation in the boys. Without motivation it was difficult for the boys to continue with school and the result was boys dropping out of school.

The teacher also pointed out the lack of interest in school, alcohol and drug abuse and the attraction to make money as other factors. She said that “some boys dropped out of school to seek employment, to indulge in drugs and alcohol and sometimes a boy did not have interest in school work.”

Teacher X informed the researcher that overall the school had no deliberate programme to detect which boys were at risk of dropping out other than noticing continuous absenteeism. However, to help boys in school, the teacher said that once in a while, the school invited a coach from Star for Life to talk to learners. This is an organization that focuses on the youth to motivate and encourage them to make good decisions about their lives.

Though there was no programme to identify learners likely to drop out, she was convinced that boys who missed classes on a regular basis, those who were active gang members, older boys, undisciplined boys and those who abused alcohol were at risk of dropping out.

The teacher identified the following obstacles to education of boys: being teased for not having certain things like trendy clothing, being involved in too many activities such as gangs in addition to school, peer pressure leading some boys to experiment with alcohol and drug abuse and parents’ unrealistic expectations of boys. She described these factors as hindrances in the education of boys.

In order to keep boys interested in school she suggested that schools provide a wide range of subjects including vocational subjects, art and design to meet the

different interests of boys. In the case of this school, the teacher explained that it offered a wide choice of subjects such as accounting, entrepreneurial, music, art and design, physical education, and various sports. Though this was the case the school had large number of drop-outs. This means that though a broad curriculum is provided, there were other factors that contribute towards boys dropping out of this school.

In the opinion of this teacher, male teachers make a difference in the lives of boys. She justified her view saying that boys usually imitated male teachers and hardly imitated female teachers. She said this was the case because boys usually associated with the male teachers in activities like sports and since most male teachers were young, boys identified themselves with them easily. In the discussion groups, however, boys identified themselves with their relatives for their motivation and not with male teachers.

Furthermore, literature review shows that there is no common agreement on whether male teachers in the schools indeed did fulfill the need in boys for male models. For instance, the Australian Federal parliamentary report recommends increasing the number of male teachers in the teaching profession and involving other males from the community to act as positive male models for boys in schools (House of Representatives & Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). In New Zealand, the principals who participated in a study by Cushman (2008) saw no link between male teachers and improved academic

outcomes. Most important though, according to the teacher was parental involvement in the education of boys. Teacher X explained that most of the times it was mothers who were involved in the school life of the boys and boys did not take their mothers seriously. She thought that if fathers were more involved in supporting boys both academically and socially the boys would be generally more motivated.

The teacher admitted that teachers faced challenges in teaching boys. She said that sometimes boys did not do their homework because of being involved in other outside school activities like gang activities, shebeens and soccer. At other times boys reported for classes without their textbooks or notebooks because they lost them in an encounter with other gang members. She also added that sometimes boys would not turn up for school because they had gang work to do or were afraid that other gang members would get to them on the way to or from school. Others reported for school under the influence of alcohol or went with weapons to school putting at risk both learners and teachers. These activities, she said were counter-productive to the efforts the teachers put to help learners and were an obstacle to their learning.

(c) Responses of Teacher W at school C

Teacher W was one of the longest serving in the school since the school was established. At the time of the research she was serving as a Head of the Counselling Support. She had a grade 12 certificate, BETD, Diploma in

Management and Leadership and a MASTEP. She also served as Head of Department.

At school C the teacher W identified peer pressure, poor family background, and poor parental support as causes for dropping out. The wrong choice of friends was described as a major factor contributing to dropping out of school because through friends boys involved themselves in unlawful activities such as drug and alcohol abuse. Though the substances are harmful to health and have a negative impact on school work, boys still indulged in them.

Teacher W said boys coming from poor background were likely to drop out of school because sometimes they could not afford to pay their school fees, meet transport cost to school or even buy essential school items like uniforms and textbooks. She further explained that sometimes boys from this background dropped out to look for jobs to help support themselves and the family. Teacher W also included boys that travelled long distances to get to school as likely to drop out.

She believed in parental involvement in the school life of boys. She remarked that overall parental involvement in her school was very poor and that boys without parental support most often lacked motivation and was more likely to drop out.

Just like the other schools that were visited earlier, this school did not have specific strategies for detecting which boys who were likely to drop out. It also depended on individual teacher's observations of boys' behavior and class

attendance registers. Persistent absenteeism by a learner indicated the likelihood of a boy to drop out of school. To prevent boys from dropping out, the school usually called parents to discuss their child's problem.

The main obstacle to learning among boys, as the teacher observed, was orphanhood, as most boys were orphans or vulnerable in this school. In some cases boys tended to look down on female teachers and this attitude deprived the boys of the needed help in their learning.

According to the teacher boys needed motivation speakers to inspire them and the school recognized that boys needed guidance and life skills. To cater for this, this school has a programme called *'My Future is My Choice'* which is intended to give guidance to learners but boys did not turn up. The teacher explained that culturally girls were kept closer to parents than boys. She felt that parental involvement both in academic and social life of boys was important because some boys dropped out for lack of sufficient parental support. Also depending on the background of the boy, the teacher felt that boys may benefit from having male teachers because it was easier to share problems to another male than to a female teacher. In order to retain boys in school she stressed the importance of parental support.

At the end of the discussion the teacher as a teacher counselor expressed her intention to talk on behalf of boys and call other teachers to discuss issues of boys and their education.

(d) Responses of Teacher V at school D

This teacher had been teaching in this school for the past 15 years. He was of Zimbabwean origin. He had a grade 12 and a Bachelor of Science. The number of years of serving in this school and elsewhere provided a rich and reliable source of information.

Teacher V referred to lack of interest in school as a contributing factor to early school leaving among boys. He referred to life outside school as being more attractive and acting as a pull factor. Boys who were not strong enough to resist the temptation lost interest in school and dropped out of school.

He identified Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) who did not have support as bound to drop out of school. This finding concurs with Ashton, HaihamboYa-Otto, Mushaandja and Yates (2008) who said that many OVC dropped out of school due to financial difficulties.

Sometimes a learner may not be an orphan instead is vulnerable in other ways such as belonging to a large household where finances are insufficient to support the boy or the boy may have family responsibilities that made it difficult to concentrate on school work. Since a boy cannot carry out school and home duties at the same time, school work suffers and the boy drops out.

The teacher talked about the way boys perceived working life which he said “to some extent influences boys to pursue making money and drop out while

overlooking the fact that it is education which leads to better wages.” Other boys, however, drop out of school out of necessity to go to work so that they can support themselves and the family.

The teacher narrated a story where he tried to help one boy who was on the street after he dropped out of school. He said that he persuaded the boy to return to school and enrolled him in grade eight at the school where he taught. After a while the boy dropped out and returned to the street. In the teacher’s opinion the boy preferred life on the street to schooling. He concluded that boys wanted to be part of street gangs and when this is the case, they often dropped out of school when they were deeply involved.

The teacher also stated that academically weak boys dropped out more often than boys who were academically strong. He revealed that the school accepted learners without discriminating. Whether a learner was capable or not, or was kicked out of other schools, this school accepted all. When the researcher was analysing the school records she realised that the majority of the boys who had dropped out in this school had poor academic records. Masitsa (2008) states that learners who continuously experience poor academic performance become demotivated and eventually they drop out.

On the other hand, the teacher viewed the matter of boys dropping out of school as a responsibility of the school as well as parents and the community at large. He pointed out that a lack of parental and community support contributed to boys

dropping out. He said, “If the community and parents cooperated with institutions of education the cases of dropping out among boys would be reduced”.

Though boys seemed to drop out by choice, the teacher strongly felt that the boys did not really choose to drop out of school. He believed that “there were underlying social issues that forced boys to drop out of school.” which should be investigated.

Just like other schools, this school too had no programme to detect boys who were likely to drop out. The usual method was observation of learner behavior, for instance this teacher was aware of a grade 8 group of boys whose activities would lead to some of the group members to dropping out. The boys did everything together, such as being absent from school on the same day, being late or on punishment as group. So far teachers had tried to dissuade the boys from further self destructive behavior but were not succeeding.

When boys dropped out, usually teachers asked other learners of the whereabouts of the boys in question. Teacher V gave an example of himself, when he followed up a grade 12 learner who stopped coming to school in the first term of 2010. He discovered that the boy lived with his single mother who was not able to control the boy or force him back to school. Since the boy avoided meeting the teacher, he learnt from the mother that the boy dropped out because he felt that he needed to work so that he could earn an income. Besides that the boy had

moved in with a woman. This was a rare case where a teacher took it upon himself to follow up a learner. More of this kind of interest in learners would save some of them from completely dropping out of school.

The researcher asked the teacher whether he thought that male teachers made a difference in the academic and social lives of boys. Having been taught mostly by female teachers in his life, he felt that it did not make a difference whether boys were taught by female or male teachers. He felt that male teachers only made a difference in the education of boys in terms of imparting male stereotypes such as in giving tips on how men should behave. He emphasized the importance of parental participation in boys' school work.

In highlighting the challenges that teachers experienced in teaching boys, the teacher gave examples such as boys' attitudes like rudeness and sometimes lack of cooperation. To overcome this problem he suggested talking and identifying with boys helped to overcome the obstacles. In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school, he said he did not believe in implementing one programme for all boys. He said that boys dropped out for different reasons therefore each case required a different solution.

(e) Responses of Teacher Y at school E

This teacher had served in this school for 20 years. She had Bachelor of Education degree and a Postgraduate Diploma/DASE. The many years of

teaching provided a rich and reliable source from which the researcher learnt about more factors that contributed to boys dropping out of school.

Teacher Y believed that insufficient parental influence in the lives of boys was one of the main contributing factors to boys dropping out of school. The teacher said that some parents were preoccupied and or burdened with problems of life. This resulted in depriving the boys of much needed attention, support and guidance. She felt that parents needed to be made aware of the importance of their participation in the schooling of the boys.

Due to poor academic performance some boys lost interest in school. The teacher Y commented that “when boys are failing they lose interest in school, especially also if they have other problems. But if they pass they stay in school in the face of problems.”

Teacher Y was convinced that boys with an academic backlog from primary school lacked the ability to cope at secondary school and dropped out of school. She said this category of boys though promoted automatically or transferred to grade 8 did not perform well, and remained perpetually behind. According to the teacher, if the boys did not grasp the material at primary they failed to cope at secondary school. This made it necessary to assess if such learners were capable of performing at the secondary school rather than just pushing them forward. To overcome the problem of academic backlog the teacher felt that it was better for the slow and academically weak boys to take 7 subjects instead of 9. Since there

was no remedial work in this school, she also felt that an introduction of remedial work in schools for slower learners would help many boys.

She strongly believed that the education system was failing boys especially at grade 10 but by opening up other fields, boys could have an opportunity to continue with education. As boys are differed from one another, she felt that schools could help them by providing both academic and vocational subjects. Then boys that are not academically inclined could take vocational subjects.

It was the opinion of teacher Y that some boys were frustrated in this school because there were no practical or vocational subjects. She suggested that boys who failed or were weak in mathematics and did not do well in accounting, could have other options such as agriculture.

From her observations, she thought that boys have been disempowered somewhere along the way. She said in the past boys were told that they were the bread winners and for this reason they worked hard because of the responsibility that awaited them. With the advent of girl empowerment she said that the focus was on girls only. In her view society had forgotten that both sexes were co-heads and therefore none were to be neglected. According to her the neglect of boys implied that they would keep messing up with their education because they felt sidelined and their future would be compromised.

She suggested having open discussions with boys in the schools and also involving church and youth leaders in the talks. She thought that sometimes boys

felt discriminated against and may think that girls had more opportunities. She went on to explain that though in some staff meetings the topic about boys came up, teachers did not look in depth in the issues affecting boys. Teacher Y indicated that in general teachers lacked the understanding of how to approach boys, especially troublesome ones. She went on to say that teachers lacked skills to enter into the psyche of boys in order to understand and help them better. Through talks, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in education could learn how boys cope with different and difficult situations. This included understanding what is behind gangsterism, rapes and why boys were involved in such activities.

Summary of Major Factors Identified by Teachers

Most teachers mentioned that it was difficult to know the real reasons why a particular learner dropped out because often learners did not give reasons for dropping out. This was because the learners just stopped attending lessons and parents or guardians did not inform the school about the status of the boy.

The responses of the teachers showed that the two major causes of dropping out of school among the boys were lack of interest in school on the part of boys and insufficient support from parents. Other significant factors identified were poor family background, orphan hood and vulnerability, the attraction of making money, peer pressure and smoking, academic weakness, alcohol and drug abuse.

In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school three strategies emerged in the discussion namely holding talks with boys, encouraging more parental involvement in the social and academic lives of the boys and broadening the curriculum by offering more practical subjects.

Though boys in the focus groups mentioned some class practices which they wanted to see some improvements, the teachers did not mention any practices on their part which may be contributing to boys dropping out of school or demotivating them. Either they were not aware of influence of their class practices or they do not reflect on their class practices.

4.2.3 Principals' Perception of the Causes of Dropping out of School Among Boys

(a) Responses of principal from School A

The principal was appointed to this school in 2007; this was his first appointment as a principal in his profession. He was in possession of a grade 12 qualification and a Bachelor of Education. Prior to being a principal he had served as a teacher for 16 years. He also served as a head of department before his appointment to the position of principal. At the time of collecting data he had been serving as principal for the past 4 years in this school.

His school was located in Windhoek in a middle class suburb. It had a total of 965 learners, 424 boys and 541 girls. There were 17 male teachers and 18 female

teachers, a total of 35 teachers. It also had a hostel which accommodated learners who needed accommodation and especially the OVC. Boys that could have dropped out of schools due to lack of finances to pay fees both for hostel accommodations and tuition for school were catered for through hostel accommodation. Maintaining the hostels was one of the challenges facing this school. Only so many learners could be accommodated because of insufficient space and funds to support learners in the hostels.

The principal from school A attributed dropping out of school among boys to lack of interest in school, financial difficulties, involvement in drug and alcohol abuse due to peer pressure, orphan-hood, absenteeism and travelling long distances to school. In spite of these factors affecting boys, he said that few boys dropped out in his school.

He explained that the usual indication that a learner was likely to drop out was irregular attendance. The learner started by missing classes bit by bit till he finally dropped out. The principal felt that learners who dropped out did so voluntarily because after continuous absenteeism they lost interest in school because they could not cope any more with school work. When a learner was absent on regular basis, the school advised the parents to either keep the boy at home or find a place close to home. This measure was taken to avoid unfortunate situations. He said that sometimes a boy would not turn up for school and it would be assumed that he was at home and parents thought he was at school

when in fact the boy was loitering in the riverbed. For the safety of the boys, parents were advised to make sure they always know the whereabouts of their children.

The principal added OVC to the list of boys likely to drop out because of financial difficulties. He said that boys in this category were also faced by many problems such as the school being located far away from home, having problems with taxi money to get to school, going to school on an empty stomach, looking neglected and feeling inferior and lacking a sense of belonging.

When asked if the school had a way of detecting which boys were at risk of dropping out, the principal said that the school used a monitor book system. Each class had a monitor book through which attendance of learners was monitored by the class monitor. Persistent absenteeism was an indication that a learner was in danger of dropping out of school. Any learner who was absent on a regular basis was asked to give an explanation.

In general to help learners from dropping out, the school exempted those who were in financial difficulties from paying school fees and also provided hostel accommodation to those who needed accommodation.

The principal also identified orphan hood, alcohol and drug abuse, peer pressure and bunking classes, insufficient parental support, and financial difficulties as barriers to learning. He said that often boys tended to be spoiled when they were good soccer players because they thought playing soccer was everything. He

highlighted that boys did not concentrate on school work if they were active in soccer. He stressed the importance of parental involvement in the daily life of boys saying that some parents never took time to find out what the boys did at school or whether the books were marked. In his view both boys and girls should be taken care of. Just because a boy does not get pregnant, society feels he will succeed without much monitoring, however society needs to pay attention to the boys' needs because there were other things that could go wrong. The principal said some parents replaced their needed supervision and care by giving learners lots of money to spend. According to him, it was better if both parents supported boys both in academic and social areas. Usually it was the mother who was more active in the life of boys. To the principal it seemed like the cultural practice of the man being the provider while the mother took care of the children contributed to this pattern. Mothers continued to participate in the lives of the learner while the fathers seemed to be satisfied with just providing material support.

When asked if the teachers in his school were aware of the challenges facing boys. He said that to some extent teachers were aware of the challenges especially peer pressure and that this was one of the factors they discussed in staff meetings. He explained that teachers often experienced disciplinary problems from boys because as the boys reached puberty they became aggressive. They did not want to be directed and teachers could not discipline them as they wished because the boys would retaliate. To overcome this

challenge he felt that teachers were supposed to support learners not only in academic work but also in boys' social lives outside school environment.

(b) Responses of Acting Principal from School B

The interviews were conducted with the Head of Department (HOD) as the acting principal. The acting principal had taught in this school for 25 years. She had a grade 12 qualification and a Bachelor of Education degree. Having served for many years in the teaching profession she said she had seen changes in boys' attitude towards school.

This was a junior high school located in Katutura suburb, in a low income area. Schools in low income areas are associated with high dropout rates poverty related problems due to financial difficulties (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Drew, 2007).

School B had 554 learners with 8 male teachers and 21 female teachers. Most of the students who attended this school were from the immediate surrounding area. A large number of students were orphans and came from a poor background. The acting principal highlighted that keeping that category of students motivated was a big challenge, despite that education for these students was the means to a better future.

The acting principal singled out the practice of bunking classes among boys as an indication of boys at risk of dropping out. She explained that a boy may start by

missing classes once a week or may be two days in a week and later a week or more. Since learners were aware that after 20-30 days of not attending classes they were going to be withdrawn, they reported to school before that time expired. They repeated this pattern until they finally dropped out of school.

The acting principal provided cases of dropouts who she personally handled. She mentioned a case of a 19- year old boy that left school in 2009, saying that he was too old and could not cope with school work. She gave another case of another boy who “was in trouble all the time with the police.” She suspected that the boy in question was involved in stealing and that was the reason why the police came after him at school on several occasions. She explained that efforts were made by the school to help the boy by providing counseling and calling in parents but he was not motivated enough to continue with school. She highlighted that when boys were in trouble with the law, they were often absent from school and therefore lagged behind with their school work. In the end they dropped out of school. For instance the 19 year old who dropped out of school because he felt that he was too old.

The third case, she narrated happened in 2008 when one boy left school to find a job. This incident showed that some boys left school to work and never came back to continue their education. She also recalled a case in 2006-2007 of a boy who was involved in gang activities. According to the acting principal, the boy

“could not cope with guardians at home or with school”. Due to the seriousness of the case the school recommended that he be transferred to another school in different environment where gang activities would not interfere with his school work.

The acting principal highlighted the problem of puberty among boys. She said that most times, problems with boys began when they attain puberty and feel that they are old enough. They no longer want to receive instructions instead they want to do as they please. At that point they start to defy authority because they feel that they do not need any one to direct them. She also remarked about the difference in motivation between gay boys and none gay boys. In her observation, though “gay boys are vulnerable; they rarely drop out of school maybe because they discuss their problems, stick together and probably have no peer pressure because of their isolation” due to their sexual orientation.

From her experience in the school, the acting principal believed that boys were less motivated now with school than in the 1980s. She compared the current trends among boys to the 1980s when learners rarely left school. She believed that cultural changes took place around 1995 in Katutura suburb, where the school is located and the changes affected learners. She gave an example of Herero and Oshiwambo boys who she described as nice, polite, but now had no drive, motivation, and easily left school, were in trouble, did not care, showed no emotions, and did not show any vulnerability.”

The acting principal considered boys coming from farms as also likely to drop out of school because of problems of adjustment when they come to school located in the urban areas. She believed that this group of boys and many boys in her school (school B) needed encouragement with school because 90 per cent of the learners in the school were orphans and vulnerable. She stressed the importance of parental involvement in the education of boys in order to motivate them in doing their school work. She also pointed out that sometimes parents did not have understanding of the value of education or at best did not understand that they too needed to earnestly participate in their children's education. She believed that the lack of parental involvement partly stemmed from the fact that parents were deprived of a good education during apartheid regime. She was convinced that educated parents were more likely to appreciate the need to participate in the education of their children than parents with little education.

In this school, Star School Coach worked with boys. Teacher counselors in the school were also consulted to help boys. The teacher counselors in the school are not professional counselors instead they are just provided with basic in-service counseling courses. These provide counseling within the school system. In situations where for instance a boy was involved in gangster activities and his school work suffered, the school administration asked the parents to move the child to another environment where the activities that deter his progress in school were absent.

(c) Responses of Principal from School C

The principal had been heading this school since it was established 5 years ago. She was in possession of a Bachelor of Education degree and had 15 years of teaching experience. With this background she shared her experiences about boys and factors that contributed to boys dropping out of school.

Her school was located in Khomasdal suburb an area with a mixture of low and middle income class but as reported by the principal and the teacher, a number of learners in this school came from low income families. Literature review in chapter 2 (Cardoso and Verner, 2006) showed that learners from low income family background are at risk of dropping out of school due to financial difficulties. In order to encourage going to school, the learners from poor background were served some food in this school. The school managed a soup kitchen to cater for needy learners and those with disabilities. Individuals and private companies helped with supplies.

The principal attributed dropping out of school among boys to several factors. One of the factors she mentioned was boys hanging out with other boys who did not attend school contributed to dropping out of school. Instead of attending classes, she said, some boys stayed away to hang out with other drop-outs and participate in smoking, alcohol and drug abuse. Since the boys received no motivation to continue with school from their friends who dropped out, they too dropped out of school at a later stage.

Bunking off classes was another contributing factor that the principal pointed out. According to her experience, boys that habitually bunked off classes eventually dropped out. She said that the habit started out little by little and soon became firmly established. She explained that a boy may be absent for a day or a few days in a week, later he is absent for a week. On the day the boy decides to report for school he would attend classes without books on him. The principal then gave an example of one boy who was absent from school for 93 days in 2007. She explained that he lived with his grandmother and the father did not show interest in his education. In 2008 the same boy was absent for 91 days and school work was not done. In 2009 he repeated grade 9. The habit continued and other boys were imitating his behavior. At that point the school called in his parents to discuss the matter and he was removed from school. His behavior was described as aggressive and he fought teachers.

The principal gave another case of a boy whose parents were separated. The principal said the boy was from a well off background with a father who was well off and travelled a lot. She described the boy as “very assertive” and that sometimes would “be brought to school by police”, “jailed several times” for theft. She explained that the boy had been supported by the school through counseling but it did not work and was finally requested to transfer to another school. He had since continued his education at another school.

This school was different from other schools which were visited in that it had an established programme that specifically supported the girls. Seminars were held for the girls at least once a month. In the seminars social issues like dating, self respect, one's vision, rape, violence, love, sex and so on were discussed. As such girls were taken care of academically and socially while boys were not privileged in the same way. There was no programme addressing boys' issues as was the case for girls. However, the principal appreciated the focus on boys during the interview and felt that there was "need of a programme assisting boys because men slowly are losing their place."

The principal observed that one barrier to learning among boys was the lack of seriousness. She gave an example of the grade 9 class in her school where boys were involved in teasing and laughing much of the time. They teased girls on their looks or manner of walk. She said that boys behaved immaturely compared to girls of their age. According to her, girls seemed to know where they were going. Most of the times it was boys who were difficult with teachers by being rebellious, unruly, laughing abnormally thereby disrupting learning and doing little work. They also featured most in behavioral reports. She described boys as having short attention spans in class, being easily bored, more physically active and not very vocal. The description of boys' behavior by the principals was consistent with literature. The study by Neidlinger (2011) found that there was a clear distinction of classroom behavior between boys and girls; boys were

described as immature, fidgety, needed more physical outlets and outspoken while girls were generally described as co-operative.

The principal also felt that “boys need to be taught social matters, and schools must adopt holistic teaching not only academic matters.” According to the American Psychological Association (2010) school programs that focus on social, emotional, and academic learning have been found to improve school attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. Sax (2006) a family physician and psychologist also encouraged schools to acquire a knowledge about gender in order to help boys as well as girls in their formation of the gender identities because this had a bearing on their schooling.

Parental involvement was considered very important in the school life of boys and especially that of the fathers who were expected to act as a role models to his sons. She emphasized that boys needed more help. She explained that if parents were sufficiently involved in the boys’ education, they would monitor the son’s activities and also supervise him.

(d) Responses of Principal of school D

The principal of this school was very enthusiastic about the education of the youth. During the research she wondered why the youth decided to drop out of

school or put little effort in school when everyone was working to help them gain an education and be independent in future.

She was the principal of the school since 1985 when it was established in Katutura. She possessed a Bachelor of Education degree and pursued a doctorate in English Literature. Besides heading and teaching in the school she has helped start some educational projects. In her school she helped establish a resource centre in 2009 with the aim of providing educational material to children who could not afford financially. The resource centre was accessible to other children from other schools. The aim of the resource centre was not only to help the learners who could not afford the materials but also to improve educational standards of these learners.

In this school there were 324 boys and 346 girls making a total number of learners of 670. It was served by 18 male teachers and 3 female teachers.

The principal at school D admitted that she had not thought about the reasons why boys in particular dropped out of school. She took it that when a learner stopped coming to school the learner would have moved to another school or to the rural area. She observed that learners left school without any explanation for their decisions and this made it difficult to determine the real reason for not coming to school. She identified cutting classes and poor academic performance as some of the indications that a learner was likely to drop out.

The principal felt that following categories of boys who cut classes, boys transferred from other schools due to bad behaviour or poor performance often dropped out of school. She revealed that in her school most often boys dropped out because they moved to other schools in town after their results improved. This was a group of learners who were taken in by the school when other schools had turned them away. When the results improve during their stay in this school they decide to go to other schools.

The principal explained that there was no specific strategy employed in the school to prevent boys from dropping out of school but she said that the school insured that learners were taught to the best and that every learner had responsibility in the school. The principal explained that: the school had a system where every learner was responsible for some aspects in the administration of the school and this gave learners a sense of responsibility and belonging. These assignments were carried out through groups called *Turmas* (group). Every learner belonged to one of these. There was a class *Turma* responsible for order in the class, the members are responsible for tasks like cleaning the board and straightening the desks before the teacher came to class. Other *Turmas* were responsible for extra mural activities, outside maintenance, helping the teacher and attending to matters of discipline. Once every term the school administration holds a meeting with *Turma* representatives. At the meetings the representatives express their concerns to the administration and teachers. The administration

listens and informs the learners of the appropriate measures in the given circumstances. The principal said this practice fostered good relationship between teachers and learners and proved an effective channel of communication.

According to the principal the school had not experienced any serious drug related problems. Instead boys who were problematic in other schools improved both in behavior and academically when they moved to this school.

The major barrier to boys learning as identified by the principal of the school was lack of parental support. The principal gave an example of the parental attendance in the previous year's parental meetings. She said, last year there were 600 learners in the school and if forty parents attended any of the meetings, then it was a good meeting." The principal was of the opinion that it did not matter which of the parents supported the boys, what was important was the support given to a learner.

Another barrier to education of boys that she mentioned was the poor educational foundation of most boys. She said this was due to lack of early childhood education especially among marginalized communities. She said this deficiency resulted in learners who could not read, count, or write. According to the principal, learners from primary school with such difficulties could not keep up with work in grade eight. She revealed that in her school there were learners who

could not read, count or write very well and boys in this category drop out because of this problem. The study by Bridgeland et al. (2006) revealed that some learners dropped out of school because they started high school poorly prepared from primary school. The principal's observation was consistent with literature. She emphasized the importance of early childhood education in giving skills for further education and the need to motivate learners. This is in agreement with the study by the American Psychological Association (2010) which revealed that early childhood education was important because it provided a foundation for future academic success. The American Psychological Association (2010) also highlighted the fact that children, who received quality early education exhibited lower tendencies of grade repetition, were more academically successful, needed fewer special education services, and were committed to graduate.

Early literacy development was also deemed important for future academic success. Children with poor reading skills were more likely to fail and repeat grades (American Psychological Association, 2010).

(e) Principal from School E

The principal had a Bachelor of Education degree and had teaching experience of 34 years. He had been a principal for 11 years in this school. With hindsight of so many years, the principal provided information with an understanding of all the contributing factors which contributed to dropping out of school among boys.

His school was the first non-racial government school. It is located in Khomasdal area. It has 476 boys and 575 girls with a total of 1051 learners. There were 14 male teachers and 23 female teachers.

The principal at school E believed that some boys leave school because of socio-economic circumstances. He said that sometimes boys leave school because “parents cannot afford to keep them any longer in school and perhaps they have to help with generating revenue for the household, such that they look for job to enable the education of or schooling of younger brothers and sisters.” Sometimes it was because of behavioral or disciplinary problems at school that they were forced to leave school.

The principal, however, indicated that in his school, there were exceptional cases where boys dropped out. He said usually parents prefer to take the boys to other schools closer to where they stay to have more control over them.

Having problems at home was given as another reason that would lead a boy to leave school. The principal explained that the guidance teacher in the school talked to learners on a regular basis in order to help and occasionally calls parents to discuss problems affecting the learners but in end they just stop schooling.

He also indicated that sometimes learners do not want school anymore. He gave an example of learners from Namibian College of Open Learning who drop out of school because they are 20 or 21 years old, consider themselves too old to be

in school. The principal said they have problems adapting to the rules and regulations of the school.

The principals identified four major factors which contributed to boys dropping out of school. The identified factors were lack of parental support, peer pressure, absenteeism and behavioral and disciplinary problems. Next were financial difficulties and being overage.

Summary of Major Factors Identified in the Schools

Many of the factors that the focus groups, the teachers and the principals identified in the schools pointed to the boys as a major cause of their own dropping out of school. For instance participants referred to bad behavior, lack of interest in school, absenteeism, gangsterism, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and hanging out with friends who dropped out of school. Failure to recognize the value of school led boys into self destructive activities like absenteeism, as listed above.

Peer pressure was identified as a strong factor in influencing boys to drop out of school. Participants felt that bad influence from friends contributed to dropping out of school for instance in bunking classes, gang activities, hanging out with dropouts or with less motivated friends

Poor parental involvement in the education of their children was echoed in every school. Most parents were not proactive in the education of boys they were more

active when their son had a disciplinary case at school. For instance teachers and principals complained about parents' apathy towards school meetings and event. In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school, parents expected to support of their sons monitor and supervise the boys, and ensuring that they attended school and completed their homework. Parents needed to be educated and reminded of the importance of their role in supporting the boys. Boys needed to be support both in the academic and social areas.

Classroom practices were dwelt upon mostly by the focus group members. They expected teachers to make learning more interesting, provide advice, counsel, and motivate boys in their education. They also recommended that schools should address male learners to find out about boys 'educational needs. This implied that both the school and the parents need to step in to help boys in both the academic and social areas in lives of boys.

Financial difficulties was mentioned a couple of times. Participants revealed that boys whose parents were unable to pay the school fees and school items dropped out of school.

Academic problems among boys were pointed out as a contributing factor to boys dropping out of school too.

Teachers and principals especially blamed boys' attitudes towards school and poor parental participation in the lives of boys.

4.2.4 Cases of Boys who Dropped out of School.

In most of the drop-out cases, the reasons for dropping out among learners were simply unknown by the school. The argument brought forward was that the learner or parents did not inform the school authority the reasons why the boy withdrew from school. This seemed to be the case even when friends close to the drop-out provided the school with information on the whereabouts of the drop-out.

Obtaining information from boys who dropped out of school proved to be a challenge because many of them had changed residences therefore could not be reached. This was one of the limitations of this study. The researcher learnt of factors that may have contributed to boys dropping out of school from the parents and guardians who knew and lived with the dropouts. Reasons which were given for dropping out of school ranged from lack of interest in school, disability, employment, indiscipline, suspension/disciplinary problems, illness/passing away, cases of criminal activities and imprisonment, apparent communication breakdown between the learner and school administration.

(a) Data from drop-outs at school A

This school unlike the other four schools is located in a middle income suburb and it would be expected that most of the learners attending at this school were from the surrounding suburbs. Ironically most of the learners in the school were from the low economic backgrounds. When the drops out figures of this school

are compared to the other schools that participated in this study, the figures for school A are much lower. This fact was also confirmed by the heads of department and the principal during the research at the school. Usually schools with most learners coming from low economic backgrounds experience high dropout rates due to financial difficulties. This was the case with other schools especially schools D and E.

In this school the researcher followed up a case of a grade 12 drop-out boy. Though the boy could not be reached in person because he was in the northern part of the country at the time of the research, the researcher managed to talk to his father. The father explained that the boy left school because he was involved in gang activities with other boys and the school did not want to keep him. An interview with Teacher Z in this school revealed that some boys in the school were involved in gangster activities. She gave an example of the existence of an eight Hockland park group of boys in the school who engaged in fights with rival gang members. She explained that the youth were involved in fighting; stealing from one another and making threats to one another and that often gang members lived in fear of being harassed by members of a rival group. She said that eventually they would drop out if the gang activities interfered too much in their lives. The focus group members in this school placed most of the causes of dropping out of school on the boys. In this event the boy did not voluntarily drop out of school but his actions triggered the cause of his dropping out of school. The principal of the school being aware of the role of peer pressure in the school

stressed the importance of parental involvement in the boys' lives. He said that some parents replaced their needed supervision and care of boys by giving learners lots of money to spend. According to him, it was better if both parents supported boys both in academic and social areas.

The dropping out of the boy was a case of push out because the boy's behavior was unacceptable in the school. It was perceived as a threat in the school. The parents expressed disappointment and wished there were other ways of solving such problems so that the learner could continue with school.

(b) Drop-outs at school B

In 2006, thirteen boys dropped out in this school compared to nineteen girls. In 2007, a total of twenty six boys and twenty four girls dropped out of school. Slightly more boys than girls dropped out of school. In 2008, forty boys dropped out compared to forty one girls. In 2009, more boys (17) than girls (14) dropped out of school. Overall from 2006 to 2009, a total of 96 boys and 98 girls were counted as drop-outs at the school. The reasons for dropping out among boys ranged from lack of interest in school and parental request. In most cases the school records indicated the reason for dropping out as 'unknown'. Though more girls than boys dropped out in this school (the factor difference being only 2 girls more, which works out to be 0.02%) the general picture on the national and regional level indicates that more boys than girls are dropping out.

The first case that was investigated in the school involved a grade 10 boy who dropped out of school in first term in 2009. Apparently the principal had summoned the boy to his office on grounds that he committed an offense. The boy, however, claimed that he was not aware of any offense which he committed. In his mind it was a matter of mistaken identity. Nevertheless, the principal ordered him to bring his parent to school and instructed the boy not to return to school without a parent. Since his father was not willing to accompany him to see the principal, the boy did not return to school again. He expressed his desire to continue with school and explained that at the time of dropping he did not even write his end of term tests. He felt that he was unfairly treated.

During an interview the acting head of the school pointed out the problem of insufficient parental involvement in boys' education. She explained that sometimes parents did not have understanding of the value of education or at best did not understand that they too needed to earnestly participate in their children's education. She stressed the importance of parental involvement in the education of boys in order to motivate them in doing their school work. The acting head also believed that the lack of parental involvement partly stemmed from the fact that parents were deprived of a good education during apartheid regime. She added that educated parents were more likely to appreciate the need to participate in the education of their children than parents with little education. When this is the case, the school administration should put extra effort to seek the parents for a discussion. This step would avoid incidences where a learner dropped out. The

boys in the focus group also attributed dropping out of school to lack of support from parents, which resulted in low motivation for boys.

A study by Patrikako (2004) indicated other factors that contributed to diminished parental involvement in their children' education in secondary schools. One reason was that parents became intimidated by demanding curricula. Another explanation was that the schools made fewer outreach efforts to involve parents. It was also a question of whether parental influence declined as their children grew older and more independent. The study by Patrikako (2004) also showed that by holding high educational expectations, parents could encourage continuously the educational attainments of their adolescents in high school and beyond. Niece (2010) also confirms that the most effective way for parents to help learners is to academically support their children by communicating to them their expectations, speaking about their potential, discussing learning strategies, encouraging career aspirations and talking about college education.

In the second case the boy also dropped out of school in grade 10 in the first term 2010. He said he and other friends in his group had been summoned to the principal's office for bad conduct. In his case it was alleged that he was involved in fighting and drinking and was seen at the location in action. The boy, however, denied any involvement in the alleged behavior and according to him the principal did not accept his explanation. As a result of the alleged behavior

the learner was told not return to school. The boy said his parents talked to the principal but there was no compromise reached and the boy was not allowed back in the school. He said he and his parents were angry about the way the case was handled. He wished the case could have been handled with more investigation. The boy, however, did not believe that the principal saw him in the middle of the fight though the principal chose not to believe the report. He wished he could continue with his school. He was unhappy because he had to discontinue. The boy is currently employed in one company. According to the regulations of the Ministry of Education a principal cannot expel a learner without notifying the school board, and the Permanent Secretary who authorizes such action (Ministry of Education 2001). He can only make recommendation to the Permanent Secretary. Through other learners the researcher learnt of other boys that dropped out, two of them were employed. One works at Namibia Breweries and the other in a construction company in Windhoek. Two were at home and one on a farm. The researcher did not follow up the cases of the two at home and the one working at a construction company because the respondents did not want to be approached for interviews. In accordance with research ethics, the rights of the boys not participate in research had to be respected.

(c) Drop-outs at school C

In 2008 in school C, six boys and nine girls dropped out. Two boys had moved to other regions, one moved to the North, the other to Walvis Bay. The reasons for

dropping out by the other four boys are unknown to the school administration. In 2009, twelve boys compared to ten girls left school. A total of 18 boys and 19 girls had dropped out of school from 2008 to 2009. As mentioned earlier on, the numbers of boys dropping out of school on the national and regional levels remain higher than that of girls.

At this school a case was investigated of one boy who dropped out of school in grade 9. He was living with a family and according to the explanation offered by the family friend or guardian; the boy seemed to be affected because his mother was an alcoholic. From the time the boy left school, the guardian had tried to speak to him and encourage him to go back to school but all efforts failed. The guardian tried to probe the reasons for leaving school but was not successful. The boy did not explain why he dropped out of school but the guardian was of the opinion that the state of the mother seemed to be a contributing factor.

The case above confirms what members of the focus group said about dropping out of school due to lack of parental involvement. They said that some parents were not available to encourage and monitor the progress of the boys in class and that contributed to boys dropping out of school. The principal also considered parental involvement to be very important in the school life of boys and especially that of the fathers. She explained that boys needed more help and that if parents were sufficiently involved in the boys' education, they would monitor the son's activities and also supervise him.

(d) Drop-outs at school D

In this school there were more drop-outs at grade 8 and 9 level. For most of the drop-outs the academic records from primary school at grade seven levels were very weak. These results may have contributed to academic difficulties in secondary school leading to dropping out of school. An interview with the principal of the school shed light on the problem of having learners who cannot cope at secondary school because of weak education foundation in earlier grades.

At this site the researcher investigated cases of boys dropping out starting from 2006 to 2009. In 2006 the school showed two Angolan boys, one aged 17 and the other aged 18 who dropped out. These two were in junior secondary school at the time of dropping out. In 2007, two boys aged 14 and 18 years respectively dropped out. The following year in 2008, thirteen boys dropped out ranging in age from 13 to 18 years. In 2009, twenty eight boys dropped out of school in grade eight. In seven cases of the boys who dropped out, no date is provided when they actually left. The total number of boys who have dropped out since 2006 to 2009 was 52. This information shows both the progression of the problem and the absence of intervention.

The first dropout case involved a boy who dropped out of grade 8. The boy could not be reached but from the father the researcher learnt that at the time of dropping out of school, the boy lived with the grandmother in Katutura while the

father lived on the farm. The father said he only learnt of the boy's dropping out of school two months after the boy had left school. According to the father, he tried to encourage the boy to go back to school but the boy told the father that he did not want school instead he wanted to work. At the time of the interview the father confirmed that the boy was working.

For this boy the parenting style made it easier for him to drop out of school. The father's intervention was late whereas if he had been directly involved in the education of his son he could have intervened much earlier by giving the boy the much needed support.

In the second case, the researcher could only talk to the mother because the boy was not available. The mother informed the researcher that the boy had stopped attending at this school because he had moved to Zimbabwe. She explained that the records at the school indicated that the boy had dropped out because the school was not informed of his withdraw and there was no formal transfer request made to the school administration.

The third case, also involved a boy moving to another school because parents had moved to another town. The school was not informed about the change of school, therefore the school counted him as a drop-out. This was a case of none communication between the parent and the school. Where a strong bond exists between the school and home, information about the learner flows back and forth between the two institutions.

In the fourth case, the boy lived with his cousin when he dropped out of school. His whereabouts were not known but the cousin who kept him said that at first he was not aware that the boy had dropped out of school until after two months. Later the cousin enrolled him at another school but he dropped out from there too.

In the last case the boy had moved to the farm. The reasons for dropping out were unknown by the informant who described the drop-out as a step brother to her brother. Since the boy was at the farm it was not possible to obtain the reasons from him for dropping out of school.

(e) Drop-outs at school E

In this school, 28 boys dropped out from 2006 to 2010 first term. During the period of research in 2010, two boys were reported to have dropped out. The reasons for dropping out were unknown by the school. In 2009, four boys were reported to have dropped out. In 2008 four boys as well dropped out, then in 2007, six boys dropped out of school and in 2006, six boys dropped out. The first case involved imprisonment for assaulting another person. The boy dropped out because he had stoned somebody inflicting grievous injury and was sentenced to imprisonment. At the time of the crime he was in grade 11. Since records in the school did not have any contact details the researcher could not follow up the case. This case demonstrated that sometimes boys are responsible for their dropping out of school. Court cases and imprisonment were cited during the

discussions as contributing factors to dropping out of school. Participants gave examples such as involvement in theft or assault as common causes for imprisonment. Groenwald (2000) conducted a study on crime in Rehoboth involving school going youth and found out that boys who had committed offenses were forced to miss classes to attend to court cases and in some cases dropped out completely to serve their sentences

The second case that was followed up involved a boy with speech impairment. The researcher interviewed the boy and one of his parents. Through the father of the boy the researcher learnt that the boy dropped out of school because some learners at school were teasing him because of his disability. He could not cope with the humiliation and eventually he dropped out of school. The father said he brought the matter to the attention of one teacher but nothing was done. An interview with the boy did not reveal the reason for dropping out though it was obvious that he had serious speech problems. However, he indicated that he was sad that he had to leave school but would be happy to go back to school. He said he would not encourage other boys to drop out of school. Given the opportunity he would like to take subjects that involve some craftwork. According to the Psychological Association of America (2010) speech or language impairment puts a learner at risk of dropping out of school. When this condition was coupled with teasing the boy felt humiliated and eventually dropped out of school.

Instances of bullying through teasing were brought up in some of the group discussions (School A and E). Boys felt strongly against this practice. They said it was humiliating and some who could not take it preferred to miss lessons or even drop out completely. As a result of teasing the boy with speech impairment dropped out of school. Bullying has an emotional stress on boys, who feel helpless to solve the problem.

Other observations

During the process of data collection in the schools, the researcher noticed a number of drop-out cases among Portuguese speaking boys from Angola. This was unexpected finding by the researcher. The reasons for dropping out were usually unknown by the school but it was assumed that they may have returned to their country. Only in one case was it reported that the boy dropped out because he did not have a study permit. Since such students require study permits to pursue education in Namibia, it may be the case that there are other students that were affected in a similar manner. Other factors such as the medium of instruction (English) in the schools may also have contributed to dropping out of school among students from Angola. Learners coming from there have to adapt to English as medium of instruction. During the investigation, the researcher was fortunate to have some Portuguese speaking boys take part in the boys' focus group discussion. It was at this point that the researcher realized the difficulties the boys experience in communicating in English. However through an

interpret the boys contributed their views on the topic at hand and their contributions are encapsulated in the findings.

4.2.5 Strategies to Prevent Boys from Dropping out of School

(a) Focus Groups' Responses on preventing boys from dropping out of school.

To prevent boys from dropping out of school the focus groups mentioned several actions that schools could take. The first suggestion was replacing corporal punishment with other means of punishment. They suggested giving a learner extra work or detention. At one particular school (school E) the researcher witnessed one teacher administering corporal punishment to learners in the staffroom.

The boys also suggested that the schools provide hostel accommodation to learners coming from far places. Having to travel long distance everyday some learners get discouraged and drop out. Sometimes transport costs involved are unaffordable for the learners; therefore lack of funds force them to end their education.

Some learners come from poor families where food is not sufficient. For this group of learners, the focus groups suggested organizing feeding programme in the schools. The programme is only in some primary schools. In secondary schools there are learners that do not have enough food at home therefore will benefit from feeding programme in these schools. People's perception of

secondary schools is that there are few learners disadvantaged to the level of lacking food. However this is not the case.

The participants suggested that talking to boys about the importance of education and social issues was inevitable. They felt that teachers could say more about:

- the value of school,
- could caution some boys about the bad influence of the friends,
- arrange meetings for male students only to find out more about boys and discuss boys' expectations and reasons for some actions that are disruptive to their education,
- arrange fun days where boys only can come together for team building and continue with their education, and
- make sports compulsory to keep boys interested in school.

The boys felt that teachers could be in the forefront in identifying discouraged learners and encouraging more parental involvement in the school and social life of boys.

(b) Teachers' Responses on strategies to prevent boys from dropping out of school.

All teachers strongly believed that parental involvement was very important in the education of boys. They felt that boys should be supported through monitoring and supervising the boys' activities. Fathers were expected to play a

more active role in supporting boys. Most of the times it was mothers who were more visible in supporting boys. They attended school meetings and disciplinary hearings. The teacher in school C, for instance said that parental involvement both in academic and social life of boys was important to retain boys in school because some boys dropped out for lack of sufficient parental support. According to her, depending on the background of the boy, some boys came from single mother households. The teacher felt that boys would benefit from male role models in the school. According to her it was easier for boys to share problems to another male than to a female teacher.

The need for community participation in the education of boys was also raised by a teacher in school D. The teacher expressed the need for community participation in the education of boys, he said that the problem of boys dropping out of school was not the responsibility of schools alone but of both parents and the community at large as well. To end the trend of boys dropping out of school required the participation of all these stake of holders in education. He suggested dealing with boys at risk of dropping out of school on an individual basis since boys differed from one another.

An open discussion of the challenges that faced boys both academically and socially was pointed out in school E. The teacher recommended holding open discussions with boys in the schools in order to learn of the experiences of boys. She suggested involving parents on a larger scale, the church and youth leaders

in the talks. The idea of open discussions with boys was also raised in focus group discussion. The teacher from school E also urged the need for schools to educate parents on their role in supporting the boys.

The teachers in school B and school E stressed the need for a broad curriculum which more practical subjects in the schools. The teacher from school B said that schools should provide a wide range of subjects such as vocational subjects, art and design, accounting, entrepreneurial, music, physical education, and various sports. Retaining the interest of boys in schooling was important because learners dropout of school for lack of interest. A broad curriculum would cater for gifted and talented boys.

Inviting motivational speakers to schools was cited by two teachers, one from school A and the other from school C. They perceived this strategy as one effective way to encourage learners. In their respective schools, this strategy was used to motivate learners from time to time. In school C, there was a programme which addressed girls' academic and social issues but there was nothing for boys. Motivational speakers were invited to speak to the girls. A similar programme was going to benefit the boys too. The teacher from school D urged for empowerment of boys with life skills on being a man this is where a programme like one in school C would benefit the boys.

(c) Responses of principals on strategies to prevent boys from dropping out of school.

In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school, principals emphasized the importance of the role of parents in monitoring, supervising and motivating boys in their education. Parental involvement in the schooling of boys was mentioned in the focus groups as well as by teachers. According to the principal in school A parental involvement was required in the daily life of boys as some parents never took time to find out what the boys did at school or whether the books were marked. In his opinion it was better if both parents supported boys both in academic and social areas. He noted that often it was the mother who was more active in the life of boys. He saw that the active participation of parents was important because it also minimized dropping out of school as well as the influence of peers. The principal also extended this responsibility to teachers. He said that that if teachers supported learners not only in academic work but also in boys' social lives outside school environment boys would be more encouraged in their pursuit of education.

The Principal in school B stressed the importance of parental involvement in the education of boys in order to motivate them and to minimize the risk of dropping out of school. She pointed out that parents needed to be reminded of the importance of their role in the education of their children. She said that sometimes parents did not have an understanding of the value of education or at

best did not understand that they too needed to earnestly participate in their children's education, therefore the school needed to educate the parents on the matter. She believed that enlightened parent would help boys to embrace education with enthusiasm and to withstand pressure from the school and social environment.

In school C the principal said that schools needed to improve the way they provided education to boys. She felt that schools are providing one sided education by neglecting the social matters which are closed linked to academic matters. She believed that boys would gain by adopting holistic teaching, not only providing academic knowledge but also equipping the boys with knowledge and skill on social matters. She considered parental involvement very important in the school life of boys and especially that of the fathers. She expected fathers to act as role models to boys. She believed that if the problem of boys dropping out of school included this approach it would also minimize the influence of peer pressure, lack of seriousness seen among boys and cases of dropping out of school.

Lack of early childhood education was a major concern to the principal in school D because learners with poor education foundation struggled with school and were at risk of dropping out of school. She emphasized the importance of early childhood education in giving skills for further education and the need to motivate learners. She also added the importance of parents supporting boys.

While principals realized the importance of parental involvement in the education of their children, the schools still experienced problems in attracting parents to attend school meetings. If boys were to receive maximum support from their parents, the schools needed to double their efforts in winning the cooperation of parents. Schools need to double their efforts or employ new strategies in order to get the parents to be more proactive.

4.3 Summary

The respondents identified several factors which contributed to boys dropping out of school. The following were the major factors in dropping out of school among boys: peer pressure, individual characteristics of boys, lack of parental involvement in the education of boys, financial difficulties, bad behavior, and smoking, alcohol and drug abuse.

In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school participants were all agreed on the need for more parental involvement in the education of their children. This was deemed significant because parents needed to monitor the progress of the boys in school, encourage, counsel and support boys. In addition boys were expected to be more responsible and take their education with seriousness hence the need to counsel, give advice, motivate and have meetings to discuss different issues that affected boys and their education.

School factors such as a friendly school environment, early childhood education, good teaching and learning practices and attending to specific needs of boys, were pointed out as essential in retaining boys in school.

The next chapter gives a summary of the study, discusses the main findings, implications of the findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of five sections. The first section is a summary of the research problem, the objectives of the study and the kind of information that was collected. This is followed by a discussion of the findings and the conclusions which are drawn of the study. Next, the practical suggestions for addressing issues that came up in the study and areas for future research are discussed. The chapter closes with a summary of everything that has discussed in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study set out to identify factors which contribute to boys dropping out of school, to find out the educational needs of boys and the strategies which schools employ in order to minimize and prevent boys from dropping out of school. The aim of the study was to provide knowledge to boys, parents, teachers, principals, the Ministry of Education, and other stakeholders in the community of the causes of dropping out of school among boys and also to help contribute towards finding solutions to the problem.

Two theoretical frameworks guided the study in identifying factors which contribute to boys dropping out of school. The first framework focused on the

contextual factors found in learners' families, schools, communities and peers which influence learners to drop out. The second theoretical framework focused on attributes of the learner which influence a learner's decision to drop out of school.

A review of literature showed that the major causes of dropping out of school among boys were attributes of the boys (the learner himself as a factor), peer influence, the family background, the community where the learner lived, and the school environment. The following factors played a role in dropping out of school among boys: aboriginality of the learner, geographic area from which the boy came from, ethnicity, drug and alcohol abuse, construction of masculinity which sometimes led to aggressive behavior towards other learners and teachers in school, attitude towards school, disabilities and others. Peer influence was a factor through association with deviant friends or dropout friends. Boys who associated with dropouts and deviant friends dropped out of school because these kinds of friends offered no motivation towards continuing with education. Economic hardships, participating in wars and conflicts were other factors which contributed to dropping out of school. In the families, the cultural capital of the families of boys, single parent headed homes, child labour and poor parental education contributed to boys dropping out of school in some cases. In schools, factors such as, academic weakness, stereotypical beliefs of teachers, irrelevant curriculum, low teacher expectations of learners, poor quality of teaching,

administering of corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion from school contributed to boys dropping out of school.

Literature review also showed that in the recent years, the focus over gender has generally shifted from girls to boys because of the increase in academic and social problems among boys. The interest in boys has largely been due to public outcry, the media, parental concern and academics' interest in boys' crisis. Much of the debate on the issue has occurred in the developed world such as the U.S.A, UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Boys are of great concern because of the economic and social problems that result to learners and society due to weak educational backgrounds, the resulting crime, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and other social evils.

Though there is a concern for boys because of increased academic and social problems, it is also clear that not all boys are having problems. Boys who are disadvantaged are to be identified.

Several strategies have been advocated and employed to address the situation. Strategies include having single sex educations, increasing the numbers of male teachers in schools to serve as role models, encouraging fathers to participate more in the education of boys, providing boy friendly school environment and

addressing the curriculum to suit the needs of boys. In order to meet the educational needs of boys and to provide quality educational experiences some countries like Australia have gone ahead and written policies on gender equity that incorporate boys' needs. Although the focus over gender has shifted to boys' problems, in most education systems in developed and in the developing world the focus continues to be on girls' education.

The survey of literature also helped in the construction of instruments which were used to collect data.

5.3 Discussion of the findings

The top most factors that were identified by participants in the schools as contributing towards boys' dropping out of school are:

- a. Poor parental support in both academic and social lives of boys.

This may be due to the fact that sometimes parents did not have an understanding of the value of education or at best did not understand that they too needed to earnestly participate in their children's education. This may partly be stemming from the fact that most of the parents were deprived of a good education during apartheid regime. Educated parents understand the value of education and

expect their children to attain the same level of education or more, and they are more supportive of their children in school.

- b. Failure on the part of boys to value and appreciate education at their age (high school aged boys).
- c. Peer influence

Factor (a) above directly affects the attitude that the young people take with them in school, from school activities to academic work; and factor (b) directly stems from factor (a) above. This complex interrelationship is woven in the fabric of society and how it imparts values to high school children. Thus neither teachers nor parents are to be isolated from the social and academic upbringing of the boys. Where parents are not available to impart acceptable values other influences take their place and play a stronger role in socializing the boys such as peer pressure. On the other hand influential males in the community can play a stronger role in socializing the boys. In the schools most of the time it was mothers who showed up for meetings and even for disciplinary hearings. Parental participation especially of fathers should be encouraged. In some countries like Jamaica the concern for boys has been followed by strong encouragement of the participation of fathers in boys' school activities. Some schools in Jamaica have father-and-son school days (Timimi, 2005). In Australia the Australian Federal parliamentary report on

boys' education recommended developing strong connection between schools and parents especially fathers.

On the part of boys, failure to value and appreciate education manifests itself in different ways. Sometimes boys lose interest in education and drop out because they do not see any connection between their aspirations and what they learn. Being overage sometimes causes boys to lose interest in school as they become overage because they cannot cope with school work. Other interests outside school become more attractive and staying in school becomes a challenge because school is not interesting and it does not cater for over aged learners. Schools, however, have not explored possible activities that can be included in the curriculum to help retain overage boys. In this study some of the boys that had dropped out were over age, 17, 18 or 19 year old.

Minor factors that emerged in the discussions as contributing to boys dropping out were:

- a. Absenteeism (boys missing classes on a regular basis)
- b. boys involvement in gangster activities
- c. poor family background
- d. alcohol and drug abuse
- e. poor academic performance
- f. poor family background

Except for factor (f) poor family background, these factors are inter-connected. Absenteeism occurs because the value of education is not appreciated by the boy. If parental control and/or teacher monitoring with reports/communication to parents or guardians on the attendance of school by the boy child are not well performed or done with firmness, sooner or later the boy will be left behind academically, which will lead to loss of interest and finally dropping out. Among the drop-out cases, there were instances where boys dropped out of school without the knowledge of the parents or guardians. The responsible guardian or parent only learnt about the boy dropping out of school long after the boy had stopped attending school. If parents and guardians closely worked with the schools and supported and monitored the boy's progress in school they would have intervened and saved the boys from dropping out.

Gangster activities is viewed by boys as something "cool", hence it is part and parcel of "peer pressure" (factor c). This again requires strong influence from home and school to discourage such activity, as it gradually lead to petty crime, then dropping out from school becomes inevitable. These factors require a strong intervention by education authorities, parents and not only teachers, to stamp out these activities.

Alcohol and substance abuse is another factor that affects boys' performance at school. This social ill is usually acquired by boys either through friends at school, or those with whom they play; or from homes where alcohol is freely

available to teenagers. Unfortunately this tendency tends to grow with time. Boys, who get introduced to alcohol early, will tend to drop out at school as a result of alcohol abuse.

Poor academic performance is as a result of some of the factors (factors a, c) mentioned above. For instance, in families where the parents have a firm control on their boy children, even when the boys performs poorly, the parents will tend to make the boys to repeat, until such time that an acceptable standard has been achieved; whereas in families where parental control is not exercised, the boys will inevitably drop out of school.

Teachers in the schools were more alert to girls' problems than to boys'. The reasons for this may be cultural. Generally girls are more protected in society than boys. Society feels that a girl is more vulnerable to abuse than a boy. For instance, there is always fear that a girl might be raped and fall pregnant or suffer violence. In addition families are often concerned about the educational and social outcomes of the girl child as a weaker sex. On the other hand a boy is expected to be brave and is encouraged to be so. He is also given more freedom to do as he wants. Sometimes this freedom works to the disadvantage of the boy as he is not able to make intelligent priorities for his life. For instance in this study some boys were involved in gang activities that interfered with their education, others preferred to drop out to start earning money. They were not

well informed that it was education that would give them better and stable incomes.

As members of society teachers sometimes hold the same expectation of girls and boys that society ascribed to. For this reason teachers show more concern for girls than boys because a girl's education can suddenly come to an end due to pregnancy while this does not happen for a boy. In Namibia the existing gender policies focus more on girls' education and their place in the labour market. This situation can be reversed by introducing policies which are more inclusive of boys' needs. In Australia gender policies have been changed to accommodate the needs of boys. A similar move in Namibia would improve the situation for boys.

In this study, the finding on boys who dropped out of school did not yield very satisfactory results; it remained a challenge to reach the dropouts in order to secure interviews with them. Most of them had moved on and it was impossible to secure one on one interview with them.

The unexpected result involved the Portuguese speaking boys. The researcher noted that there are a number of boys in this group who drop out of school. The schools did not know the factors that contributed to dropping out of school among Portuguese speaking boys. The assumption was that they returned to Angola. The literature which was covered by the researcher does not highlight how being an immigrant contribute to dropping out of school among boys.

5.4 Conclusions

Individual attributes, peer influence, family, school and community related factors contribute to boys dropping out of school. Boys are mostly affected by their own attitudes towards school, peer influence and poor parental involvement in their academic and social life.

Teachers had little knowledge about boys' education. Most of the knowledge they used in dealing with boys and boys' problems depended on trial and error, common sense and the cultural understanding of the society. Teachers usually pay attention to boys due to disciplinary cases of troublesome ones

Parental participation in school activities was poor especially of the fathers as a result boy received little support in this area. Increased parental participation would motivate the boys and help them to cope with both academic and social pressure. Teachers, too, get motivated to do a better job as they see the increased participation on the part of parents in their children.

The common practices in the school towards preventing learners from dropping out of school mainly involved taking note of inconsistent class attendance, boys who are constantly in trouble with school authority, and counseling or talking to the boy. If this approach did not work then parents were invited to discuss matters. The schools also offered the subject Life Skills which is meant to empower learners with needed skills is not examined and usually is taught by

teachers who were not qualified for it. For this reason learners do not really take it seriously. Even teachers who teach the subject are not under pressure to ensure that learners acquired the recommended skills.

The schools also relied on motivating the learners for instance some schools invited motivational speakers to talk to learners once in a while. At one school the police had been invited to give a talk on alcohol and drug abuse. At another school the Star Coach was invited to talk on the same topic.

5.5 Recommendations for improvements

The National Gender Policy (2010) and other programmes on the 'girl child' have benefited girls. Significant research also has been done concerning the challenges facing the 'girl child'. Furthermore, girls have been encouraged to remain in school and to study in subject areas that were once dominated by boys in the past. Thus the problems facing girls' education have been explored and strategies formulated to counter them. While it is and has been important to address the challenges facing girls and their education, it is now necessary to investigate factors affecting the education of the 'boy child'. At present there is little information on the causes of dropout among boys in Namibia. For this

reason more research is needed in order to fill this gap. This step will ensure that both boys' and girls' needs are addressed.

In Namibia the existing gender policies focus more on girls' education and their place in the labour market. This situation can be reversed by introducing policies which are more inclusive of boys' needs. In Australia gender policies have been changed to accommodate the needs of boys. A similar move in Namibia would improve the situation for boys.

Schools need to take a holistic approach towards the education of boy. Boys should be educated both academically as well as socially. This can be done in schools by holding meetings such as seminars, where information on social issues like, dating, rape, sex, impregnating, violence against women, self-respect and setting personal goals for life can be passed on.

Teachers and principals should be equipped with skills and knowledge needed to understand and effectively help boys. This knowledge can be accessed through conferences, workshops, reading material on boys' education such as education journals and using internet and other sources. Equipped with knowledge teachers can encourage boys, and assume the role of *in loco parentis* (a substitute parent), be a supportive "friend", mentor, disciplinary taskmaster and someone they can confide in.

The principals and the school management team should monitor classroom activities to ensure that teachers use class time to teach effectively. This should be done by regularly monitoring the teachers' attendance, preparation for lessons and ensuring that learning takes place in classes. Some teachers attend lessons but spend little time on actual teaching. The result is that learners do not invest their time in school when they gain little or nothing in class.

Poor parental involvement in the education of boys was reported in all the schools which were visited. The schools therefore should find new ways of strengthening the bond between the schools and parents in order to help the boys. The 'boy child' should be cared for not only academically but also socially. Teachers as well as parents should be aware of the needs and challenges that boys are facing. Some of the social activities that boys engage in work against their education therefore parental and teachers' involvement are paramount.

Boys' education needs should be addressed on national as well as on a school level to ensure that the educational needs and opportunities for both sexes are met. This means identifying who boys are disadvantaged because not all boys are having problems.

Finally, the schools should also improve their record keeping for purposes of efficient monitoring and evaluation of dropout rates among boys and for good record keeping. In comparing statistics provided by the schools and the Term Dropout reports there were large differences in the information available for the

same year. The information forwarded to the Ministry of Education from the schools ought to tally reasonably when compared but this was not the case.

Teacher training institutions such as the University of Namibia should offer a course on issues such as masculinity in order to prepare teachers to teach and support boys. For instance KwaZulu Natal University, offers this subject.

5.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Identifying the types of masculinity existing in the Namibian society and the role masculinity plays in shaping the attitudes of boys towards education.

Identifying what peer cultures influence boys attitudes towards education in secondary schools.

Finding out how the participation or absence of the father figure affects boys' performances academically and socially.

Find out the extent to which male teachers motivate boys both in the academic and social lives of boys the schools.

Since more boys are dropping out of school, there is need to find out what the trend is among boys in institutions of higher education.

Investigate the factors that contribute to boys dropping out of school in countries such as Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho in the SADC region and make a comparison to the Namibian situation.

These topics are only a suggestion, there are many issues concerning boys that wait to be investigated since in this area there is little known in the Namibian context.

5.7 Summary

In this study peer pressure, poor parental engagement in the education of boys and factors attributed to the learner himself were major factors contributing to boys dropping out of school. Other factors included the family socioeconomic status and home experiences, school performance, and out of school pull factors such as boys being in gainful employment before completion of studies. In order to prevent boys from dropping out of school having open discussions with boys, increased parental involvement in boys' school programmes and motivating learners was important. For successful engagement of boys in education, this study suggested re-examining the national gender policies, educating parents about their role in supporting boys in school, equipping teachers with knowledge and skill needed to help boys. As this study did not exhaust the topic on boys dropping out of school, further research is required in this area.

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APPENDIX A

Introduction Letter from the University of Namibia to the Ministry of Education

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

Private Bag 13301, 340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioncerspark, Windhoek, Namibia



08 January 2010

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Private bag
Windhoek

Dear Sir

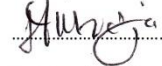
Permission to do research in schools in the Khomas Region

Mrs Viola Mapani is a registered student of the University of Namibia. She is pursuing Masters of Education programme in the Department of Educational Foundations and Management. Currently she is doing the second circle of the programme, which requires her to do research. Consequently, she is conducting a study on school dropout of male learners. The title for her study is: *Investigation and Analysis of Factors Contributing to Boys Dropping out of Secondary Schools in the khomas Region in Namibia*. This is a very important topic that hasn't enjoyed fair attention of the research fraternity. There is a significant body of research knowledge available about the education of the "girl child", but the education of the "boy child" has been hitherto unresearched. Of late there has been a talk of "men and boys at risk" in Namibia. And Mrs Mapani's preliminary literature review shows that there are more boys than girls dropping out of Namibian schools. It is, therefore, my hope that she will be able to identify factors that cause dropout rate of boys in our education system. This is an evaluation research that will benefit both the community of scholars and our Ministry of Education.

The supervisory committee of Mrs Mapani comprises of myself Dr J. Mushaandja and Prof R. K. Auala. Both of us are specialists in the area of Educational Management. We have known Mrs Mapani as one of the few excellent students we have ever had. We have no doubt whatsoever in our mind that she would be able to conduct research of high quality and create reliable knowledge.

I therefore strongly recommend that the Ministry of Education grant her permission to conduct the said research in the Khomas Region.

Thank you. Yours faithfully



Dr J. Mushaandja

Main supervisor: Mrs Viola Mapani's supervisory committee

APPENDIX B

Request for Permission to Collect Data in Schools in the Khomas Region.

To: The Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Education

Windhoek

From: Mrs V. Mapani,

P.O Box 31352

Pionierspark

Windhoek

Date: 12th January 2010

Dear Sir,

Re: Permission to Collect Data for M. Ed Thesis in Schools in the Khomas Region.

I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Masters Degree of Education in the department of Educational Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. Currently I am doing a research as part of the requirement for my Masters Degree.

Data from the Ministry of Education, for 2004 to 2007 on enrollment figures, suggests that there are more girls in school than boys, both in primary and secondary schools. This is so despite the fact that more boys are enrolled in grade one than girls. Though

more boys are enrolled in grade one, later girls outnumber boys as learners move from primary to junior and senior secondary level. At institutions of higher learning namely, the four colleges of education, Caprivi, Rundu, Ongwendiva and Windhoek colleges of education; University of Namibia and Polytechnic of Namibia, female students continue to dominate (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008). This information suggests that more boys than girls are dropping out of school.

In the light of the above information I would like to investigate factors that contribute to early school leaving among boys in secondary schools in the Khomas Region. This research is part of the requirement in fulfillment of the Masters of Education programme that I am pursuing. By pursuing this research it is hoped that the study will provide learners, educators, policymakers, and the community an explanation and understanding of the problems affecting boys, and will contribute towards finding a solution to the problem. Furthermore, it may help in identifying boys who are likely to drop out of school. The Ministry of Education has done a lot to improve the education and retention of girls in school, it is also hoped that more will be done for boys.

Therefore, I am kindly requesting for permission to collect data in the schools in the Khomas Region. Enclosed please find the interview guides I intend to use to collect data. During data collection I will ensure that the school schedule is not interrupted. Data will be collected after school hours. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained from the schools will be treated strictly confidential.

I will be very grateful if you will consider my request.

Yours Sincerely

Viola Mapani (Mrs)

(M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education).

APPENDIX C

Letter of Permission from the Khomas Region to Conduct Research in the Schools



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
KHOMAS REGION**

Private Bag 13236, Windhoek Tel. 264 61 2934329/231948 Fax 264 61 248251

Enq: Josia S Udjombala
E-mail: tatemadala@yahoo.com
Ref: 11/1/P

Mrs V Mapani
UNAM M. Ed Student (Education)
P O Box 31352
Pionierspark
Windhoek

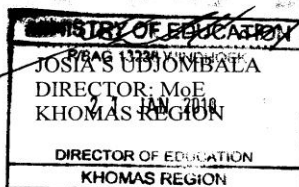
January 21, 2010

Dear Mrs Mapani

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH IN THE KHOMAS REGION

1. I write to refer to your letter of January 12 instant, addressed to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, regarding the above subject matter.
2. I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted to you to conduct research in the area of your interest in schools in the Khomas Region, on the understanding that participation by either teachers or learners in the envisaged research is voluntary. Further, no normal school proceedings should be interrupted by the exercise.
3. We wish you all the very best in this endeavour and would appreciate receipt of a copy of your findings, for our library.

Thank you



APPENDIX D

Letter to the Principals to Requesting Permission to Conduct Research in the Schools

To: The Principal

From: Ms V. Mapani, (M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education)

University of Namibia.

Date: 1st March 2010

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: Permission to Collect Data for M. Ed Thesis at your School.

I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Masters Degree of Education in the department of Educational Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. I am currently investigating factors contributing to boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region. Your school has been chosen as a source of information for this research.

I am kindly requesting for permission to conduct part of my research in your school. I would like to interview you the principal of the school, one teacher with most experience in your school and five boys in your school.

I have enclosed the interview questions that I would like to discuss during the interviews. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained from your school will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be mentioned in the research.

I intend to conduct the interviews after school programs so that I do not interrupt the school schedules.

I will be very grateful if you will consider my request.

Yours Sincerely

Viola Mapani (Mrs)

Interview Guide for Principals E

A. Instructions

The questions that will be asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to feel free to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the final report.

B. Personal and Professional Details

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Age

less than 30 years

between 41-50

between 31-40

51 years or more

3. Highest academic qualification

.....

4. Highest professional qualification

.....

5. Years of teaching experience prior to becoming a principal

.....

6. School.....

C. Interview Questions

1. What are the reasons for early school leaving among boys?

➤ In your school there are boys who have dropped out of school.

Do you have an idea why boys left school early?

2. Did you see any indications that they were at risk of dropping out of school?

➤ Did they leave school by choice?

➤ What were the reasons for dropping out of school?

(if boys voluntarily dropped out of school)

➤ Among the boys who dropped out of school are there some who were forced to leave school?

➤ Under what circumstances will the school decide to discharge a learner from school?

(if boys were forced by the school to leave)

➤ What were the circumstances under which they were forced to leave school involuntarily?

3. Does the school have a way of detecting which boys are at risk of dropping out?
 - Are there boys who have been identified as likely to drop out of school?
 - Is there a particular group of boys more likely to drop out of school than other boys?

4. What strategies does the school employ to prevent boys from dropping out of school?
 - Was there anything done to help retain the boys who dropped out?
 - Are there any barriers to learning as far as boys are concerned?

5. In your opinion do you think boys have certain educational needs?
 - Has the school conducted any needs assessment concerning boys' issues and their education?
 - Do you think boys have similar educational needs as girls?
 - Has the school conducted any needs assessment for the education of boys?
 - Do boys learn in the same way as girls?
 - Do you have an idea if boys prefer certain teaching methods to others?
 - Does having male teachers in the school make a difference in the retaining boys?

6. How important is parental involvement in the education of boys?

- Does it matter whether it is the mother or father who is more involved?
7. In your opinion are teachers aware of difficulties (needs) that boys experience in their schooling?
 - Is it the case that boys are doing fine, its girls who need more help?
 8. What are some of the challenges that teachers face in teaching boys?
 9. What can be done to help overcome these challenges?
 10. What suggestions would make to help retain boys in school?
 11. Would you like to add anything that you feel is important and should be mentioned?

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide for Teachers

A. Instructions

The questions that will be asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to feel free to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the final report.

B. Bibliographical Data

i. Gender

Male

Female

ii. Age

less than 30 years

between 41-50

between 31-40

51 years or more

iii. Present position in the school

.....

iv. Highest academic qualification

.....

v. Highest professional qualification

vi. School.....

C. Interview Questions

1. What are the reasons for early school leaving among male learners?

- In your school there are boys who have dropped out of school.
Do you have an idea why boys left school early?
- Did they leave school by choice?
- What were the reasons for dropping out of school?
(if boys voluntarily dropped out of school)
- Under what circumstances will the school decide to discharge a learner from school?
- Among the boys who dropped out of school are there some who were forced to leave school?
- What were the circumstances under which they were forced to leave school involuntarily?

2. Does the school have a way of detecting which boys are at risk of dropping out?

- Are there boys who have been identified as likely to drop out of school?
- What measures are being taken to assist the boys?
- Is there a particular group of boys more likely to drop out of school than other boys?
- What are the reasons?

3. What strategies does the school employ to prevent boys from dropping out of school?

- For boys who dropped out of school, was there anything done for them to help keep them in school?
- What would you say are some of the challenges boys experience in school while trying to meet their learning needs?

4. What would you say are the educational needs of boys in school?

- Has the school considered what could be the particular educational needs of boys?
- Do you think boys have similar educational needs as girls?
- Do boys learn in the same way as girls?

- Do you have an idea if boys prefer certain teaching methods to others?
(Book-learning, practical learning)
 - Does having male teachers in the school make a difference in the education of boys?
5. How important is parental involvement in the education of boys?
 - Does it matter whether it is the mother or father who is more involved in terms of motivating the boys with school?
 6. In your opinion are teachers aware of educational needs of boys?
 - Is it the case that boys are doing fine, its girls who need more help?
 7. What are some of the challenges that teachers face in teaching boys?
 8. What can be done to help overcome these obstacles?
 9. What suggestions would you make to help retain boys in school?
 10. Would you like to add anything that you feel is important and should be mentioned?

APPENDIX G

Interview Guide for Boys' Focus Group Discussions

A. Instructions

There is no right or wrong answers to the questions that will be asked. You are encouraged to feel free to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the final report.

B. Bibliographical Data

- i. Age group range.....
- ii. Grade.....
- iii. School.....

C. Interview Questions

1. Some of the boys have dropped out of school.

What are some of the reasons why boys drop out of school before completing their education?

2. You have not dropped out of school. What inspires you to continue with school?
3. What would you describe as the educational needs of boys?

➤ What subjects would you prefer as boys?

(academic or vocational)

- What do you expect from your teachers?
- How would you like to be taught in class?
- Would you prefer to have more practical work or book-learning in class?
- What are the reasons for your choice?

4. What are some of the challenges that you experience in school?
5. What can a school do to help prevent boys from dropping out?
6. In your opinion what can be done to retain boys?

APPENDIX H

Interview Guide for Drop-out Boys

A. Instructions

The questions that will be asked have no right or wrong answer. You are encouraged to feel free to answer the questions according to your experience, understanding and knowledge. All the responses will be treated with absolute confidentiality and your name will not be mentioned in the final report.

B. Bibliographical Data

- iv. Age.....
- v. Year of dropping out of school.....
- vi. Grade.....
- vii. School.....

C. Interview Questions

1. What were the reasons for leaving school before completing grade 12?
 - Did you leave school by choice?
2. Why did you choose to leave school?
(if respondent voluntarily dropped out of school)
3. Who made you to leave school?
(if respondent was asked to leave school)

4. Did anyone at school encourage you to stay in school?
 - Who encouraged you to stay in school?
 - How did you take their advice?

5. Did you experience any academic problems while at school?
 - What were your usual grades, above average or below or average?
 - Did you like the subjects that you took?
 - What would you say about the quality of teaching you received at school?
 - Was there a connection between what you learnt and what you wanted to do in future?
 - Do you think that teachers had high expectations of you?

6. Did you attend school regularly?
 - Were there days when you would be absent from school?
 - On which days would you be absent from school?
 - Was it by choice that you were absent from school on those days?
 - If it was not your choice who forced you to be absent from school?
 - For what reasons were you forced to be absent?

7. What can you tell me about your relationship with the teachers?
 - Did you get along very well with the teachers?
 - Were there times when you got into trouble with teachers?
 - What were the reasons for getting in trouble?
 - Did the relationship with your teachers affect your attitude towards school in any way?

8. Did you make any friends at school?

- Did you get along very well with your friends?
- Among your friends were there some who had dropped out of school?
- Did you spend more time with friends in school?
- Were any of your friends in trouble at school or out of school?

9. Were you happy with the school discipline?

- Which part of the school discipline did you dislike?
- What would you have preferred?

10. Did you like school?

- What are some of the factors that contributed to liking school?
- Were there factors that made you dislike school?
- What made you to dislike school?
- Are there some school rules or practices that you did not like?
- What would you suggest should have been done to help you like school?
- What advice can you offer to school leaders to help them make school more interesting?
- What would you say are some of the educational needs of boys in schools?

11. Would you prefer to be taught by male or female teachers?

- Tell me how that would help the boys?
- What do you think about being taught by female teachers?
- Are female and male teachers effective in the same way?

➤ Which gender would you prefer?

➤ Explain that to me?

12. To what extent were your parents involved in your schooling?

➤ What support did you get from them?

➤ What could they have done to help you remain in school?

➤ Who would you like to be more involved in your education, your mother or your father?

➤ What can parents do to help boys remain in school?

➤ What are the reasons?

➤ How far did your parents go in education?

13. In your opinion what can be done to make learning better for boys?

14. What advice would you give to other boys who are thinking of dropping out of school?

15. What can educators do to help retain boys in school?

APPENDIX I

Letter to the Teachers Requesting an Interview

To: The Teacher

From: Ms V. Mapani, (M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education)

University of Namibia.

Date: 1 March 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Request for an Interview

I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Masters Degree of Education in the department of Educational Foundation and Administration in the Faculty of Education. I am currently investigating factors contributing to boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region. Your school has been chosen as a source of information for this research. I am kindly requesting for your participation in this research.

I have enclosed the interview questions that I would like to discuss during the interviews. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained from you will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be

mentioned in the research. I intend to conduct the interviews after school programs so that I do not interrupt your school schedule.

The information provided will be useful to teachers, parents, learners and to the whole community. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be mentioned in the research.

I will be very grateful if you consider my request.

Viola Mapani (Mrs)

APPENDIX J

Letter to Boys Requesting an Interview

From: Ms V. Mapani, M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education.

University of Namibia.

Date: 1 March 2010

Dear

I am a student at the University of Namibia, carrying out a research on factors that contribute to boys dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region. You have been chosen to participate in this research.

I am hereby requesting for your participation in an interview on the of..... to provide me with information on dropping out of school. The information provided will be useful to teachers, parents, learners and to the whole community. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be mentioned in the research.

I will be very grateful if you consider my request.

Viola Mapani (Mrs)

APPENDIX K

Letter of Consent to Parents/Guardians to Interview the Learner

To: Parents/Guardians

From: Ms V. Mapani, M. Ed Student, Faculty of Education.

University of Namibia.

Date: 1 March 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians

Re: Request for an Interview with Your Child

I am a student at the University of Namibia doing a Masters Degree of Education in the Faculty of Education. I am currently investigating factors contributing to boys' dropping out of secondary schools in the Khomas Region.

I am hereby requesting for the participation of your child in an interview on the ...(date of interview)... of...(month of interview)..... to provide me with information on dropping out of school. The information provided will be useful to teachers, parents, learners and to the whole community. Please note that the research is purely academic and the information obtained from your child will be treated strictly confidential. No names or personal details will be mentioned in the research.

I will be very grateful for your consideration.

Viola Mapani (Mrs)