

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**THE EDUCATIONALLY-RELATED CHALLENGES FACED BY TEENAGE
MOTHERS ON RETURNING TO SCHOOL: A NAMIBIAN CASE STUDY**

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MASTERS IN EDUCATION
General Education Theory and Practice

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by

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is my own work except in places where references have been made to other sources acknowledged within the text and that it has not been previously submitted in any University.

Signed: *L.M.Shaningwa*

Name: **Lilia Mariro Shaningwa**

Date: **January 2007**

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my lovely daughter,
Diana Dymos Shilomboleni

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in coming back to school in two senior schools in the Kavango Education Region. This small-scale study focused on the challenges that influence or affect the academic progress and development of these learners. The study looked at how teenage pregnancy is perceived as a social problem in many countries as well as in Namibia and examined its impact on the educational aspirations of the young mothers.

Namibia has a policy in place to cater for the continued education of learners returning to school after the birth of their babies. This policy was analysed and its implementation in the selected schools formed part of the study,

The findings revealed that the educational challenges faced by these young women range from social exclusion to the need to manage the dual responsibilities of motherhood and study. The way in which the learners who participated in this study are viewed by their peers and their teachers was found to be influenced by the cultural connotations ascribed to women as soon as they become mothers, a factor that adds to the challenges these learners face when returning to schools. Cultural connotations which perceived a mother as an adult in the society was attached to the change of the behaviours and attitudes of school young mothers. The findings also showed that while these learners tended to be withdrawn in class and were generally unable to participate in extra-mural activities, they none the less were able to compete with their peers in terms of their academic performance

The study revealed that there is no shared understanding of the policy among the participants and that it is not effectively implemented in the schools, nor is it uniformly applied.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
- FAWE - Forum for African Women Educationalists
- FAWENA - Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia
- GEP - Girls Education Project
- IIEP - International Institute for Educational Planning
- MEC - Ministry of Education and Culture
- MBESC - Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture
- MOE - Ministry of Education
- NAMCOL - Namibia College of Open Learning
- PSI - Policy Studies Institute
- SENT - Skills and Education Network Team
- TPP - Teenage Pregnancy Policy
- UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
- US - United States
- WERK - Women Educational Research of Kenya

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by providing the background of the research and the research question. The chapter also provides an outline of the chapters in this dissertation.

1.1 Background of the study

1.1.1 Research site

Namibia is a semi-arid country covering an area of 824 116 square kilometres in Southern Africa. It is bordered by Angola in the north, Zambia in the north-east, Botswana to the east and South Africa in the south. The Kavango River divides Namibia and Angola, the Zambezi River divides Namibia and Zambia, while the Orange River divides Namibia and South Africa. Namibia is divided into thirteen (13) administrative regions, one of which is the Kavango where the research was conducted.

The Kavango Region is situated at the north-eastern part of Namibia. The region has a population of 202 694 and the growth rate is 3.7% (Namibia. National Planning Commission, 2003). The Kavango Education Region is one of 13 education regions in Namibia. There are 328 schools (267 primary schools including one private school, 45 combined schools including one private school, 3 junior schools, and 10 senior schools including two private senior secondary schools). According to the Education Management Information System for Kavango Education Region: 15th School Day Statistics (2006), there are 72 709 learners (35 686 females and 37 023 males) and 2 295 teachers.



Figure 1. Map of the regions of Namibia (Sue Abraham. (2006). Graphics Services Unit, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.)

1.1.2 Research context

After independence in 1990, gender equity was considered as a fundamental human right in the democratic Namibian society. To achieve gender equity the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture [MEC] (1993) identified the barriers that hindered learners from remaining at school to complete their education. Some of the general barriers which were common before independence and which prevented children from continuing with their education were identified as compulsory of payment of school fees and buying school uniforms. These barriers contributed to high school dropout rates. After independence the MEC was committed to provision of equitable access to education for all Namibian children. As a result, compulsory school fees and school uniforms were abolished. After identifying the barriers, the MEC committed itself to ensure “access, equal opportunity and equity for girls” in Namibian education (Namibia. Ministry of Education and Culture

[MEC], 1993:134). Despite the commitment of the MEC to provide equitable access to education for all children, the problem of school dropout for learners in general and girls in particular still persists.

The school dropout rate in the Kavango Education Region has been identified by the education authorities as a serious concern among the communities of the region. For the purposes of this study, school dropout means those learners who leave school prematurely without completing a grade in any academic year, even if there is a provision to re-admit them into school the next academic year. The Kavango Education Region has the highest school dropout rate in Namibia (Namibia. Education Management Information System: 2003). According to the Kavango Education Region: 15th School Day Statistics (2004a), a comparison of the number of boys and girls who have dropped out of schools shows that the female school dropout rate is higher than that of boys. The Annual Education Census for Kavango Region showed that 1 820 female learners dropped out of school in 2004 and 2 019 in 2005. Comparative figures for boys were 1 755 in 2004 and 1 862 in 2005 (Kavango Education Region, 2004b & 2005).

There are various reasons that have contributed to the high school dropout rate in the Kavango region. One of the main factors that lead to school dropout among girls in this region is teenage pregnancy. The evidence shows that more than 400 female learners per annum drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy (Kavango Education Region, 2004c). This continues to be a concern in the region and nationally.

In 2001, the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) approved a Teenage Pregnancy Policy (TPP). The aim of the policy is to allow female learners to continue with their education after leaving school due to pregnancy. The policy states that a girl who becomes pregnant is allowed to be in school until such time as she is about to deliver. After delivery, she must stay at home for twelve months to take care of her baby, after which she can resume her studies (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2001b).

Furthermore, in 2002 the Girls Education Project (GEP) was established in the Kavango Education Region with the assistance of UNICEF to help female learners improve their performance and their retention in school. In 2003 the GEP started to make use of the media to discuss the importance of girls' education and the disadvantage of becoming a teenage mother while schooling.

However, despite such campaigns, the re-admission of learners who become teenage mothers is problematic in schools. The practice in the Kavango Region shows that age restriction plays a major role in teenage mothers resuming their schooling. For a teenage mother to be allowed back in school she has to be under twenty-one (21) years old when returning to school after the mandatory year of looking after her baby. Teenage mothers also are not given priority in the admission policy of schools. The re-admission of teenage mothers in a particular school depends on the availability of space.

Further, there are currently no data that relate to how successful these learners who become teenage mothers are with regard to completing their studies. Nor is any information available relating to specific educational problems and issues these learners experience when resuming their studies after a year or more. Also, there has been no investigation of the impact of the implementation of the policy on teenage pregnancy, particularly on the re-admission of young mothers in Kavango Education Region.

My interest in the area was prompted because of my professional context. I am an Education Planner responsible for academic affairs in the Kavango Education Region. One of my responsibilities in this regard is to identify the educational needs of learners in the region. I am also dealing with educational data, monitoring and evaluation of regional activities including analysis of data. One of the issues in the region is to ensure gender equity. It was in this regard that I became aware of the challenges that teenage mothers faced in completion of their education. In doing this study, I hope to illuminate the plight of these young women in order to serve their needs better in my professional context.

1.2 The aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in coming back to school. The study was conducted in two selected senior schools in the Kavango Education Region. The study addresses the following two main research questions:

1. What educationally related challenges do teenage mothers face in coming back to school?
2. What are the perceptions and experiences of the teenage mothers in relation to the re-admission policy in schools?

1.3 Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. This chapter has given an introduction to the context of the study. In chapter two I present a theoretical framework based on a review of literature that I found relevant to my research area. I focus on the different views of researchers on teenage pregnancy as a social problem. Secondly, I focus on the challenges of becoming a teenage mother. Thirdly, I focus on the attitudes of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers, and finally, I focus on the policies on teenage pregnancy in different countries as well as the implementation of the re-admission policy in Namibia.

In chapter three I discuss the different research methods used in conducting my study. This chapter also provides a theoretical framework for the research design which was selected for my study. Secondly, I focus on the research context and participants, particularly on my research setting and the sampling I followed to select the two senior secondary schools and the research participants. Thirdly, I focus on data collection tools: these included interviews and document analysis. The remaining sections of the chapter focus on validity, data analysis, research ethics and limitations of the study.

In chapter four I focus on the data presentation collected through interviews and documents analysis under various themes such as: experiences of teaching young mothers, young mothers in the school environment, difficulties faced by young mothers, the perception of the respondents on the teenage pregnancy policy (specifically on the re-admission aspect), support provided to teenage mothers at school, and an analysis of the academic performance of the young mothers interviewed.

In chapter five I present the discussion of data and the interpretation of my findings and in chapter six I present a critical overview of the study, research design, the summative reflection of the main findings, lessons learnt from this study, limitations of this study and tentative suggestions for actions and future research on the basis of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As indicated in chapter one, the purpose of my study is to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in coming back to school. In order to better understand the issues related to the study, I start by presenting a framework, which focuses on teenage pregnancy especially by looking at the different views of researchers on teenage pregnancy as a social problem. Issues in this regard include the consequences related to dropping out of school such as poverty, the limited career opportunities of teenage mothers, teenage mothers' social behaviour and social status as well as exclusion.

Secondly, I focus on the challenges of becoming a teenage mother. This includes looking at the school environment, the way teenage mothers are treated, stigmatisation and the impact on their learning abilities. Thirdly, I look at the attitudes of both teachers and learners towards teenage mothers in school. This includes the negative attitudes towards teenage mothers and the perceptions of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers. The fourth section focuses on the educational support teenage mothers need. This explores the importance of rendering educational support to teenage mothers and the types of educational support.

The next section focuses on the recognition of educational rights of teenage mothers. This includes the expulsion of pregnant girls from school, the motivation of policies on teenage pregnancy in different countries and the teenage pregnancy policy. Finally, I focus on the implementation of teenage pregnancy policy in Namibia. I draw directly from policy documents on teenage pregnancy, more specifically the part of the re-admission of young mothers.

2.2 Teenage pregnancy as a social problem

The social problems identified by the research discussed below include first the issue of poverty, both as a consequence of school drop-out and as a contributing factor for teenage pregnancy. Second is the issue of the problems faced by these girls in finding employment, which is both a consequence of their dropping out of school and a result of the issues many of them face as single parents. To this is linked their dependence on welfare. Third is the issue of isolation and stereotyping and the associated problems these learners face.

Reports from various countries including Australia (2001), Canada (1998), United States in (1991) and (2000), London (2005), South Africa (1999), and Namibia (2003) have been analysed. The findings from these countries show the similarities and differences in issues related to teenage pregnancy between developed and developing countries.

2.2.1 Poverty

In Canada, “the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy is linked to several other social problems, which affect the family, the school and the community” (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998:21). The evidence from developed countries such as Canada and Australia, and a developing country such as South Africa, revealed that teenage pregnancy contributes to poverty. The view expressed by the Robin Hood Foundation (1996) was that teenage pregnancy is virtually a guarantee of poverty. In a US report, the US Department of Health and Human services (2000) found that a large number of teenage mothers are poor, with more than 60% of them living below the poverty line.

In addition, the majority of teenage mothers do not have the economic or social resources in place to provide for themselves or their children (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). In Australia, the evidence showed that teenage mothers faced social problems because they have reduced their education and possibilities for employment opportunities which can lead to poverty and financial difficulties (Boulden, 2001).

In the same context, Berry & Lennon (1998) added to the above points by stating that teenage mothers face numerous challenges such as poverty, which significantly affects their ability to care for themselves and their children. In South Africa, research indicated that teenage pregnancy and disruption of schooling are causally interlinked and both can be attributed to poverty. Further, poverty is seen as a contributing factor to girls falling pregnant (Mokgabalone, 1999).

2.2.2 Limitation of career opportunities

The evidence from developed and developing countries showed that teenage pregnancy contributes to the limitation of career opportunities for teenage mothers. The above argument was based on the lower qualification achieved by girls who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy. The evidence in Canada and the United States revealed that young mothers are at a greater risk of leaving school or attaining a lower level of education and therefore the possibility for them to reach their professional goals is minimal, which leads to fewer job opportunities. The Robin Hood Foundation (1996) revealed that teenage pregnancy is a guarantee of long-term reliance on welfare because in most cases teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of high school, which limits their future chances for employment.

The Skills and Education Network Team (SENT) (2005) further illustrated that early parenthood held back qualifications of many school young mothers in London because it disrupts their education; this then makes it difficult for them to find employment. In support of the above evidence, McCauley-Brown (2005) revealed that many studies show that without a high school diploma, young parents have a difficult time finding employment to support their babies. In line with that, the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) stated that limited education means job insecurity for young mothers, who have very few choices open to them if they have no diplomas, skills or occupation. The general consensus is that lower educational levels and higher rates of poverty are the outcomes found among the children of teenage parents. In the same vein, Tipper (1997) stresses

that teenage mothers are more likely to be poorer than their peers and this could lead to their children becoming poorer as well.

The findings in Namibia illustrated that teenage pregnancy remains a major concern, because pregnancy amongst learners is one of the problems which prevent girls from continuing with their education (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2001a). The study conducted on teenage pregnancy in Central and Southern Namibia revealed that girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy rarely return to complete their education and their opportunities for socio-economic advancement in later life are considerably reduced (IRINNews, 2005). These findings are similar to that of the Robin Hood Foundation (1996).

In the US socio-economic background is seen as a contributing factor to teenage pregnancy as is seen as part of a circle in which many young women are trapped. This is looked at in greater detail in the next section

2.2.3 Social behaviour and status

Apart from the limited career opportunities, research reports that teenage pregnancy has an implication that has a major impact on social behaviour. According to Gillham (1997), teenage pregnancies are seen as endemic in some areas largely because of the broad social conditions which affect teenage mothers' social behaviour. The US Department of Health and Human Services (2000) stated that teenage mothers come from backgrounds with few role models or opportunities for improving their livelihoods, due to this they are at risk of repeating the pregnancy, which limits their life options even further.

The reports furthermore revealed that in industrial nations, teenage pregnancy carries a social stigma. Social stigmatisation results in many young mothers being at risk of remaining as single parents. The Robin Hood Foundation (1996) revealed that many teenage mothers remain single for most of their young adult years. A study done on teenage pregnancy in Australia also revealed that young mothers are at greater risk of being sole parents, of being involved in a series of unstable relationships, and of being victims of violence within relationships (Boulden, 2001). According to the Canadian

Ministry of Education (1998:13) “many young mothers assume their family responsibilities alone because the fathers of their babies often leave prior to the birth”. It further states that they do not receive any support from the fathers and do not show concrete commitment as fathers.

In the same vein, the US Department of Health and Human Services (2000) illustrated that many teenage mothers have a difficult time coping with the dual roles of parent and teenager. Gillham (1997) mentioned that teenage pregnancy affect the young mother’s social behaviour. Similarly, Loignon (1996) argued that teenage mothers often face consequences such as social isolation, poor life habits, stress and depression.

2.2.4 Social exclusion

Other evidence showed that teenage mothers and their children face the risk of social exclusion in their communities. In Canada, it was revealed that “adolescents who drop out of school due to pregnancy take the first step toward social exclusion, isolation and dependence” (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998:15). According to the Social Exclusion Unit (2002), teenage parents and their children face a long-term risk of social exclusion which disrupts their personal life including their education. Furthermore, Boulden (2001) added that young mothers suffer from social isolation during their staying at school which contributes to depression among them.

According to Samuels, V. J., Stockdale, D. F. & Crase, S. J. (1994), social exclusion contributes to the high school drop-out among young mothers and can cause early and/or forced marriages, a higher probability for divorce and lower self-esteem.

This sub-section demonstrated that teenage mothers are more at risk of being under-educated, single parents and poorer than other young girls of their ages and that their children in turn can experience the same problems.

2.3 The challenges faced by teenage mothers

This section examines the findings of researchers concerning the difficulties experienced by teenage mothers in schools in different countries. The challenges examined in this section are the school environment, the way teenage mothers are treated and the impact on their learning abilities

Various studies and reports from the different countries considered all seem to emphasise the enormous challenges that teenage mothers face. The evidence demonstrated the similarities and differences faced by teenage mothers in schools and in society as a whole. A study done on the challenges and choices keeping teenage mothers in school in Quebec, Canada, revealed that to become a teenage mother is a “challenge that affects all aspects of a young woman’s personal, family, social and school life” (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998:3).

2.3.1 School environment

In Kenya, the results of a web-based project to survey and educate students about health revealed that the school environment contributes to the school drop-out of teenage mothers because of harassment, indicating that about 48% of pregnant girls undergo harassment at school (Mitchell & Halpern, 2003).

McCauley-Brown (2005) also stated that the challenges faced by pregnant teenagers and young mothers in finishing school are complex. For instance, McCauley-Brown referred to a teenage mother who was assaulted on the school grounds and did not feel safe anymore. As a result, she stayed out of school for a year during which she suffered depression. Consequently, her education suffered. The above-mentioned points serve to illustrate how young mothers are vulnerable in school environments which are not supportive and are consequently at risk of not completing their school.

In the United States, the issue of school environment focused on whether the school meets the needs of young people. According to the American Association of University

Women (1991), teenage mothers are in a similar position to juvenile offenders who stay or enrol in schools which do not meet their needs, and then isolate themselves from the classroom experience: they internalise their frustration and in the end their performance is affected.

2.3.2 The way teenage mothers are treated

The findings from developed and developing countries illustrate that teenage mothers are treated differently at schools. The studies conducted in developing countries such as Botswana in 1995, Kenya in 2000 and Namibia in 1995 revealed the similarities regarding the way teenage mothers and pregnant girls are treated in schools. Reports from developing countries demonstrate that some African societies devalue girls' education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: [UNESCO] (1996) revealed that the chances of the girls returning to the school system after giving birth are often remote, and their parents felt that whatever investment they made in the girls' education was wasted. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW] (2000) as cited in UNESCO (2003) revealed that one country had admitted that young mothers were denied opportunity to resume their education after birth. In Botswana, Wamahiu (1995) found that less than 30% of teenage mothers return to school after delivery due to the lack of information about re-admittance or the lack of places for individual learners. The evidence points to the fact that even where there are policies in place regarding the re-admittance of these girls, the policies are interpreted variously.

In Namibia, teenage mothers are allowed to apply for re-admission, but they have no right to recourse if they cannot find a school, while Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution appears to "envisage that children will be protected against arbitrary denial of their right to education" (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 1995:122). As Nyambura (2000) argued, the problem of re-entry of teenage mothers into the school system continues to demand attention as society's negative attitude towards pregnant girls and teenage mothers persists.

Other evidence showed that negative treatment towards young mothers is a global problem. In Australia, many young mothers face the greatest challenges in terms of the way they are treated by their peers (Davies, 2004). The study done on girls and school exclusion illustrated that one of the girls' difficulties at school is "invisibility", which has a serious consequence for their ability to get help. According to Osler, Street, Lall & Vincent (2005:1), girls' problems are generally not a priority in schools and this does not help the case of teenage mothers returning to school. The above-mentioned researchers argued that girls are often overshadowed by boys being given preference in problem solving.

Other findings revealed that the negative treatment causes emotional problems for the teenage mothers: the SENT report (2005) shows that unfavourable treatment experienced by young mothers contributes to emotional barriers such as estrangement in schools as other learners and staff members disapprove of them instead of helping them. What was noticed in these reports was that teenage mothers not only face problems with fellow learners and the school authorities in general but they also encounter problems with their teachers, many of whom not only are not supportive but may even be actively hostile. This negative treatment contributes to poor relationships between teenage mothers and their teachers.

2.3.3 Stigmatisation

Various researchers and reports revealed that stigmatisation is one of the challenges faced by teenage mothers in school community. As mentioned earlier, to become a teenage mother is a challenge that affects all aspects of a young girl's personal, family, social and school life.

In Kenya, those teenage mothers who do return to school suffer from stigmatisation, ridicule, and abuse from both teachers and other learners (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003:111). According to research in Australia, stigmatisation is a central issue that causes teenage mothers to drop out of school. As in other parts of the world, there is little likelihood of them completing secondary education (Boulden, 2001). Meanwhile, other

researchers revealed that stigmatisation not only causes teenage mothers to drop out of school but causes them to remain single parents. A study tracing one of the babies of teenage mothers found that most teen mothers drop out of high school because of stigmatisation (Harrison, 1990). The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign's (2004) findings state that many teenage mothers face prejudice and stigma from their communities and schools failed to accommodate them because they were stereotyped as bad learners.

2.3.4 The impact on learning abilities of teenage mothers

This section explores the impact of challenges faced by teenage mothers on their learning abilities. Many reports, such as that of the Canadian Ministry of Education in 1998, SENT in 2005 and Elimu Yetu Coalition in 2003, illustrate the learning disabilities of teenage mothers. McCauley-Brown (2005) revealed that those teenage mothers who experience difficulties at school have less motivation to stay in school.

Other findings showed that by the time teenage mothers re-enter the system, they are always behind with at least one grade level compared to their peers, which results in developing a negative attitude about learning and lack of self-confidence in their own ability to master academic skills (Bergsmann, 1994 and Girls Incorporated, 1996).

The Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) added that group activities of teenage mothers with other peers end, and they feel that they no longer fit at school. As a result, they stay away from other learners and the quality of their work is reduced. Teenage mothers were found to miss many lessons and often fell behind with schoolwork because of double responsibilities of schoolwork and motherhood. Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) reported a Kenyan girl who got pregnant and took a break in October 2002 to give birth. She returned to school in May 2003 but did not sit for examinations because she had missed many lessons. In some situations, teenage mothers do not have access to phones, which can cause difficulties whenever they need to keep in touch with the school; for instance, if they are going to miss classes because their children are sick (SENT, 2005).

The evidence showed that teenage mothers face problems in organising their new lives, managing their roles as mothers, and meeting the demands of school (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998). SENT (2005) added to the above points indicating young mothers' day-to-day barriers in continuing with their education. For instance, young mothers often fall behind with schoolwork and have to catch up during school holidays and weekends, but in some cases they are working very late in the evening to meet deadlines.

Researchers revealed the views of young mothers who felt that they need assistance to cope in society. According to Mitchell & Halpern (2003), students complained about living in a world where young people were left to discover things for themselves. As a consequence, many young mothers ended up with misinformation, learning important lessons far too late. Even though teenage mothers face enormous challenges, the report showed that teenage mothers wish to continue with their education. In October 1998, the Australian Policy Studies Institute (PSI) press release stressed the need for better education of teenage mothers (PSI, 1998).

2.4 The attitudes of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers in school

The previous section alluded to the issues of the way in which teenage mothers are treated by the school authorities. This section examines various research findings about the negative attitudes and different opinions of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers in schools as a specific issue facing these young women.

2.4.1 Negative attitudes towards teenage mothers

This section illustrates the similarities and differences regarding negative attitudes towards teenage mothers of both developed and developing countries.

Studies from developed countries such as Australia, Canada and others revealed that teachers and learners have negative attitudes towards teenage pregnancy and teenage mothers which contribute to their dropping out of school.

The reports generally indicate that teenage mothers confront negative reactions from their fellow learners and teachers. The study done on the challenges and choices of keeping teenage mothers in schools revealed that fellow learners and teachers use disapproving glances or unkind remarks, and that other teenage mothers quit school because of pressure from the school administration or teachers. Furthermore, it was found that pregnant girls or teenage mothers experience rejection, which pushes them away from school (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998:11).

Studies done in the US illustrated findings regarding negative attitudes. It was found that teenage mothers are stereotyped as being inadequate mothers. According to the paper by Bucuvalas (2002), pregnant girls are aware of the stereotypes about them. Other evidence revealed that both teachers and their fellow peers have low expectations of them (SENT, 2005).

The situation in Namibia illustrated the similarities to the situation in developed countries. The findings in Namibia regarding negative attitudes were that sometimes teenage mothers are rejected by friends in schools and experience pressure by teachers. The study done on promoting girls' education through the re-entry policy for adolescent mothers revealed that one young mother in Omaheke region in the southern part of Namibia experienced problems at school, for instance her friends rejected her, she isolated herself from others, and teachers did not provide any support (Tjombonde, 2003).

2.4.2 Perceptions of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers

The section discusses different perceptions of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers in both developed and developing countries.

The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004) stated that teenage mothers find it difficult to be accommodated in schools because, as indicated earlier, they are stereotyped as bad learners. According to the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), some school administrators or staff members fear that teenage mothers will set a bad example to other learners and give the school a bad image. Furthermore, the same

ministry quoted some learners who say such things as “the presence of a teenage mother in the school discourages them from entertaining a realistic idea of motherhood” (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998:18).

The findings in Australia revealed the same issue concerning the bad image teenage mothers might give to schools. According to Boulden (2001), some schools still fear that pregnant girls and young mothers give the school a bad image, and teachers fail to encourage young mothers to remain at schools, while others actively encourage them to leave the school. In the same vein, Mitchell & Halpern (2003) revealed that teachers and learners have different feelings towards pregnant girls and that some of them believe that schools should expel pregnant girls. The above evidence demonstrates that young mothers are not given support and there is little understanding of their needs and of their situation.

However, the findings in developing countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Namibia illustrated the differences compared to developed countries. The various researches of the above countries revealed that teenage mothers are regarded as adults, and they are expected to terminate their education, while other learners felt that schools are not the best places for teenage mothers.

According to Lema (1997), in Tanzania, regardless of the age, a girl is regarded as an adult after she has given birth; she is expected to assume adult responsibilities and to terminate her education. According to a UNESCO report, in Zimbabwe, the education of girls is generally not particularly positive and they found that girls who fell pregnant were expelled from school as per official policy (UNESCO, 1996).

In Namibia, boys felt that schools are not places for teenage mothers because they are regarded as adults. According to IRINNews (2005), in 2003, the debate on the issue of teenage pregnancy which was organised by the Department of Sociology, at the University of Namibia asserted different feelings between female and male students. Male students were of the opinion that schools are places for children and a girl who falls

pregnant should automatically be considered an adult. This was not the case with female students: most girls who fell pregnant were pitied by their peers (IRINNews, 2005).

The findings showed that negative attitudes and perceptions of teachers and learners towards teenage mothers can affect them and this can create a culture of low expectation among young mothers. According to SENT (2005), negative attitudes and perceptions can be a problem and or create a culture of low expectations which make teenage mothers feel that they have failed already their education. The analysis illustrated that young mothers have realised the negative attitudes towards them and therefore they understand that it is best to have children only once they marry, but they seek support. “We believe that marriages are the best environment for bringing up children but we live in the real world, and we know that today people support each other in many different ways” (May, 2004, as quoted by Davies, 2004:2). Researcher such as Bucuvalas (2002) emphasised that teenage mothers need support in different ways. Bucuvalas (2002:2) argued that “teachers and peers seemed to forget that pregnant girls or teenage mothers still have interests or concern beyond their pregnancy and their babies”. The above-mentioned points are a lesson that young mothers are experiencing difficulties and need support.

2.5 Educational support needed by teenage mothers

As mentioned in the previous section, teenage mothers felt strongly about supporting each other in different ways. In this section, I focus particularly on the importance of rendering educational support to young mothers and the types of educational support provided by different countries.

2.5.1 The importance of rendering educational support to teenage mothers

Teenage mothers are also a valuable resource. It was noticed that researchers such as Russell, Lee Faye, & the Latina Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workgroup (2004), Boulden (2001) and Berry & Lennon (1998) and reports such as the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), Policy Studies Institute (1998) and the US Department of Health & Human Services (1998) concluded that teenage mothers need to be assisted in order to

contribute to the development of their countries. The Policy Studies Institute in Australia argued that teenage mothers should not be treated as a homogeneous group and that policy and services need to be flexible to meet their differing needs (Policy Studies Institute, 1998). Other evidence from different researchers illustrated that practitioners of sexual and reproductive health argue that education is the key to creating education opportunities for teenage mothers. Russell, Lee Faye, & the Latina Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workgroup (2004:10) revealed that many of the practitioners argue that teenage mothers who continue with their education create opportunities for their future and reduce stress. In doing so, they serve as positive role models for their children.

According to Boulden (2001), one of the most effective ways to minimise the risk of difficulties of teenage mothers is to support them to stay connected to schooling. She further argued that in doing so, the possibility of repeat pregnancy during the teenage years can dramatically be reduced by remaining at school or in some other form of education. As the Canadian Ministry of Education report (1998:13) argued, “If young mothers do not return to school they are extremely likely to remain poor”. Therefore, the best way to overcome the challenges faced by teenage mothers is to assist them to stay in school in order to acquire the necessary qualifications they need to enter the job market and to meet the demand for skilled workers.

The Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) felt strongly that without support, teenage mothers often end up living on the fringes of society; isolated and dependent, (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998). The above Ministry recognises the importance of providing support to every young mother in order for them to reach their education goals. The hope of the Canadian Ministry of Education was that every adolescent who is about to start a family or who is already a mother should receive all the necessary help for her and her child to reach their full potential. In addition, the annual report on a national strategy to prevent teen pregnancy 1997-1998 for the US Department of Health & Human Services argued that lack of support from families and friends for their efforts to stay in school and their own immaturity can make it difficult for teenage mothers to stay in school (US Department of Health & Human Services, 1998).

According to the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) in London, the Ministry of Public Health hopes to have 60% of teenage mothers in school or at work by 2010. To achieve this, the Social Exclusion Unit argued that first of all, they have to significantly reduce teenage pregnancy rates and then to improve support for teenage mothers. However, in the light of the above-mentioned points, the same unit wanted to ensure that young people receive help relevant to the risks and difficulties they face, for instance through providing services which give them opportunities to maximise their potential (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

2.5.2 Types of educational support

The reports consulted illustrated that teenage mothers need different types of support according to their difficulties. The evidence from developed and developing countries illustrated the similarities and differences in terms of types of support provided to young mothers. However, helping young mothers return to schools was emphasised by both developed and developing countries.

According to Roche's (2002) speech, as cited in Social Exclusion Unit (2002:4), "Young people do not fit into boxes; they need different forms of support at different times in their lives." The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004) stated that teenage mothers need better support including helping them to continue with their education by advising them, providing better childcare, and increasing the availability of support through housing. The above report and the Canadian Ministry of Education in 1998 argued that the school environment plays a major role in helping young mothers continue with their education.

According to the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), not all teenage mothers have the same needs: although some decide to stay in school in the familiar social environment, others do not. Meanwhile, some can and want to continue their schooling in the regular education system, others need specially adapted instruction and guidance tailored to their needs. This report argued that for young mothers to reach their educational goals they need moral support. The same Ministry added to the University of

Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004) that the school's prime role is to welcome each young mother, to listen to her needs and to seek motivating solutions (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998). In addition, the ministry found that social assistance is one of the recourses for many teenage mothers, allowing them to escape from their emotional isolation and financial problems. Therefore, it argued that to make it easier for teenage mothers to continue with their schooling requires the efforts of all stakeholders in education including providing these mothers with financial support.

Other researchers such as Boulden (2001) argued that schools should come up with strategies that can help teenage mothers pursue their education. According to Boulden (2001), the New South Wales Department of Education and Training bases its support for pregnant and teenage parents on its welfare policy, which states the importance of schools developing proactive strategies to inform school communities about the way schools can help pregnant women and young mothers continue their education without discrimination.

Teenage mothers also need to be informed of all the resources and options available to them so that they can find the best environment in which to continue their studies and to implement their plans (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998). Emphasis is placed on adapting educational programmes in order to better respond to the young mothers' lives. In October 1998, the Policy Studies Institute press release reported that one of the recommendations made to assist teenage mothers was that educational programmes should be relevant to where the lives of young people lead and where they want to lead. In doing so, the Policy Studies Institute felt that this could be the positive approach to reduce the unfavourable effects of teenage motherhood (Policy Studies Institute, 1998).

Other findings in Australia stated that educational programmes have to include the issue of antenatal care in order to prepare young mothers for parenthood. Boulden (2001) argued that schools should provide an educational programme for young mothers, which requires antenatal care and preparation for parenthood to be added to their normal curriculum. According to Boulden (2001), currently all Australian states and territories

have a wide variety of responses and programmes regarding teenage pregnancy and motherhood in schools.

In Kenya, researchers such as Nyambura (2000) argued for re-entry programmes. This includes three recommendations: to set up special bridging centres for young mothers where they could continue with their formal education and/or specialised training while breastfeeding their babies, to create opportunities for out-of-school girls and to exploit informal sector apprenticeships for them, and to introduce flexible models of attendance so that institutions operate at full capacity during the day and evening, throughout the week, month and year to allow for full attendance and completion of courses (MOE/UNICEF/KAACR, 1994:12-13 as cited in Nyambura, 2000).

In the light of the above-mentioned recommendations, the evidence from Canada illustrated that many of the girls who have been able to benefit from the special services offered in the school system have managed to change their perception of school and have made the efforts necessary to accomplish their schooling (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998).

Guidance and counselling were emphasised by researchers such as Boulden (2001), Nyambura (2000), and Roye & Balk (1996) and the Canadian Ministry of Education report (1998) as types of support which can help teenage mothers to continue with their education. In Australia, the study done on teenage pregnancy argued for the need to set up effective approaches to address the needs of those groups of young women who are most likely to become young mothers to enable them to have faith in themselves to have hope for the future, to experience success at school and to be able to access networks of support both in and out of school (Boulden, 2001).

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in Kenya emphasises the need for guidance and counselling in schools (Nyambura, 2000). The Canadian Ministry of Education report (1998) also points out that appropriate guidance services should be provided to teenage mothers to help them formulate their education plan and assess the various options that are available to help them continue with their schooling. Roye &

Balk (1996) also emphasise that adolescents who attended the guidance programme were significantly less likely to drop out of school and had significantly better self-esteem. The Canadian Ministry of Education report (1998) pointed out that young mothers should be aware of their responsibilities and the need to think about the future of their babies

In conclusion, Davies's argument emphasises that the issue of teenage pregnancy must be taken seriously. According to Davies (2004:1), the Shadow Minister for Women told a fringe meeting at the Tory conference in Britain that the issue of teenage pregnancy should be taken seriously and that they should "not be judgemental" in addressing the social issues that are endemic to teenage pregnancy in the country. The evidence from various researchers demonstrated that if stakeholders in education want to help young mothers and to overcome the difficulties they experience, those in authority have to create opportunities for them to continue with their education.

2.6 The recognition of educational rights of teenage mothers

As mentioned in chapter one, after independence, the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture committed itself to ensure access, equal opportunity and equity for girls. Since this study investigates the educationally-related challenges faced by school teenage mothers, this section focuses on the expulsion of pregnant girls from school and teenage pregnancy policy in different countries, including Namibia, with the aim of better understanding the teenage pregnancy policy which includes re-admission of young mothers.

2.6.1 Expulsion of pregnant girls from school

According to UNESCO (2003:4), "In many countries, pregnant girls face expulsion from formal education". The study conducted on educating girls illustrates that in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, unmarried girls are increasingly dropping out of school due to pregnancy, because school policies often require their expulsion. According to Lema (1997), Tanzania has an expulsion policy where pregnancies are concerned. The 1982 Education Act promulgated in Zanzibar disallowed married and pregnant girls from

continuing with their schooling (Wamahiu, 1995). The situation in Namibia prior to independence in 1990 was almost the same as in the above-mentioned countries. I have observed several cases before Namibian independence when a number of girls were forced to terminate or suspend their education because of pregnancy.

2.6.2 The motivation of the Teenage Pregnancy Policy

The African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child explicitly recognizes the right of the pregnant girl to an education (UNESCO, 2003: 4). The Ominde report (1964) and other education reports such as Gachati report (1976), Mackay report (1981), Kamange report (1988), Master plan on education and Training (1998) and the Koech report (2000), as cited in Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003), all made reference to the need to accelerate improvements in girls' education. The Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) states that the Koech report (2000) proposed a new structure for the education system and also recognises the efforts already made by the Kenyan government to improve girls' education, including a policy of allowing those girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy to continue with their education.

The evidence from various reports stated the importance of improving girls' education. The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child has encouraged many countries including Botswana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia to consider permitting the re-entry of girls into formal education after pregnancy. Nevertheless, there is general consensus that girls should stay at home "for the twelve months immediately following the child's birth and may be subject to other limitations, notably that the girl may not re-enter the same school" (CEDAW, 2000:13 as cited in UNESCO, 2003).

According to UNESCO (1996), the new government of Malawi also committed itself to promote the education of girls, which seriously lagged behind that of boys. There was an affirmative action programme for the entry of girls to secondary and higher education. Wamahiu (1995) found that Guinea was forced to reintegrate pregnant girls into the school system. In 1993, after four years of lobbying of the Guinean Education Minister

by FAWE members, they were able to sign a decree permitting unmarried pregnant girls to re-enter the education system after taking maternity leave (Wamahiu, 1995).

Other researchers such as Mitchell & Halpern (2003) in Kenya revealed that young mothers were not required to return to school or college and as a result many dropped out of education. Even so, it was realised that these teenage mothers could still succeed in their education after giving birth and they could have still have a bright future.

The study in Namibia found that the policy at many schools is to exclude a schoolgirl who becomes pregnant for one to two years. She may take advantage of continuing educational classes if she can financially afford to. It adds that even when schoolgirls who are expelled are over the age of sixteen, the practice may still be a violation of Namibia's obligations under the Constitution and the convention to prohibit all sex discrimination, since schoolboys who father children do not face the same sanctions as pregnant schoolgirls (UNICEF, 1995).

In 1994, the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) established a Study Group to investigate the issue of teenage pregnancy in Namibia. After the investigation, the study group realised the need to come up with a policy on teenage pregnancy. The Study Group in consultation with stakeholders drafted the policy on pregnancy amongst learners based on the findings of the investigation that many girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy and rarely returned to school (Namibia. Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2001a).

2.6.3 Teenage Pregnancy Policy

After the recognition of the educational right of pregnant girls, many countries endorsed the TPP to allow young mothers to continue with their education. According to the paper prepared by Nyambura (2000) for the Regional Ministerial Consultation on closing the gender gap in education, the Kenyan government came up with a policy of allowing the re-entry of girls to schools after giving birth. The aim of the policy was to increase girls'

participation in schooling. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education publicly encourages schools to allow girls to come back to school (Nyambura, 2000).

According to UNESCO (1996), the new government of Malawi also wanted to ensure promotion of the education of girls, and the policy which discouraged girls from enrolling and remaining in schools was reviewed. One of the policies reviewed was the re-admission of girls who get pregnant while in school, after delivery and guaranteed childcare (UNESCO, 1996).

Other researchers argued about the importance of breaking the gap between the re-entry policy and the stigma of being young mothers in schools. The Women Educational Research of Kenya (WERK) works to bridge the gap between the re-entry policy for teenage mothers and the continued stigma of being a school-age mother (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003:123). According to Nyambura (2000), in Kenya the re-entry policy of teenage mothers has partially worked because of assistance from the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE), which has been instrumental in creating awareness of various groups of people regarding re-admission among other issues related to the girl child. It seems that although the Kenyan government has a re-entry policy into schools for teenage mothers, the FAWE took responsibility to mobilise the community in order to send the young mothers to school.

In Namibia, the teenage pregnancy policy (TPP) states that a girl who falls pregnant is allowed to be in school until she is about to deliver. According to the Namibian MBESC (2001c) “after delivery and provided that a social worker is satisfied that the baby will be taken cared of by a responsible adult the girl then has the right of re-admission to the same school within twelve months of the date on which she left school, irrespective of her age” regardless whether she is above the age of twenty-one. The TPP further says that a girl has the option, within the same period, to return to another school provided that space is available. The TPP further pointed out that these provisions are not intended as a form of punishment, but recognition that a pregnant girl has taken other responsibilities which must be given attention (Namibia. MBESC, 2001c:4).

The SENT (2005) report revealed that developed nations also realised the right of teenage mothers to be re-admitted into schools after giving birth. In Australia, the Department of Education and Community Services guarantees the right of pregnant students to attend schools and specifies that terms or conditions of admission to school should not discriminate against students. The participation of girl learners should not be subjected to any discrimination either (SENT, 2005). Tasmania in Australia's southern island has a similar policy on the re-entry of teenage mothers to school (Boulden, 2001).

2.7 Implementation of the re-admission

In this section, I particularly explore the implementation of TPP especially on the re-admission of young mothers in Namibia. According to UNESCO (2003), several governments have taken up the challenge of reducing the schoolgirl dropout rate by introducing policies that allow the re-entry of teenage mothers into schools.

The study done on promoting girls' education through the re-entry policy for adolescent mothers revealed that re-entry of young mothers into schools is still a major problem in many Namibian schools. Tjombonde (2003) argued that the problem of refusal to re-admit young mothers in schools and other related problems still exists in Namibia.

Nyambura (2000) argued that "the re-admission is not always a straightforward issue because of the moral stigma often associated with teenage mothers. Nyambura further stated that some school principals are not sympathetic enough to give teenage mothers space in schools" (Nyambura, 2000:4).

According to Tjombonde (2003), the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia (FAWENA) has been advocating for the crafting and implementation of policies that address the issue of schoolgirl pregnancy. She further found that some young mothers experienced problems in returning to school: some teachers did not want to accept teenage mothers, and other teachers refused to take back teenage mothers whose infants died after a few weeks. Those teachers argued that they acted in accordance with the policy on teenage pregnancy which states clearly that teenage mothers must wait for twelve months before they can be re-registered (Tjombonde, 2003). As a result, those

young mothers whose babies died were required to stay at home regardless of whether there was a child to care for or not.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a better understanding of the impact of early parenthood and how it affects school teenage mothers' personal, family and school life. The initiative made by WERK, which is earmarked to break down the gap between the re-entry policy for young mothers and the stigmatisation of being a school-age mother, was found to be a good lesson. The next chapter presents the research methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores and analyses the different research methods used in conducting my study. The research methods and approaches selected were determined by the purpose of this study, which is to investigate the educational challenges encountered by teenage mothers on returning to school. This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the selected research design. The study is based within a qualitative interpretive research approach, and the first section of this chapter explains the selection of this orientation. Secondly, I discuss the research context and participants, focusing particularly on the research setting and the sampling followed in selecting the two senior secondary schools and the research participants. Thirdly, I focus on data collection tools, which include interviews and document analysis. This section provides a brief description of how data was collected and recorded. The remaining sections focus on validity and triangulation, data analysis, research ethics and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research design

This study is conducted within the interpretive paradigm, which considers the experiences of individuals as the main source of interpreting social reality. According to Cantrell (1993:84), the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to understand the situation of the phenomena being studied and to interpret meanings within the “social or cultural context” of the participants. Therefore, this research paradigm allows me to interpret the experiences, thoughts, and opinions of the research participants in their own setting and cultural context.

For the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (2003), the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for an individual and his/her subjective world of experience and treats human behaviour as varied and informed by the situation and the context where it takes place. Ernest (1994:24) characterises the interpretive research

paradigm as primarily concerned with “human understanding, interpretation, intersubjectivity and lived truth” and the attempt to understand human experiences at a holistic level.

The advantage of conducting this study within this research paradigm is to allow me, as the researcher to understand and make sense of the actions and views of my participants from an individual perspective and to understand that different people can perceive the same social phenomenon differently. But the importance of this paradigm is its ability to reflect the reality as perceived by individuals’ own experience and interpretation (IIEP, 2003).

Since the purpose of my study is to investigate the educationally related challenges faced by teenage mothers in coming back to school, the interpretive paradigm allows me to explore and get a deeper understanding of my research participants’ perceptions, experiences and opinions in relation to the educational challenges encounter by teenage mothers in schools in the Kavango Education Region.

3.2.1 Qualitative research

As I am locating my research within an interpretive paradigm, a qualitative research approach is the appropriate approach because it complements attempts to investigate the phenomenon in a natural setting and focuses on understanding the social phenomenon holistically in its entirety. Qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience as it is “lived” or “left” or “undergone” (Sherman & Webb, 1988: 7 as cited in Merriam, 1998).

According to Bassey (1995), the qualitative research approach is characterised by the description and interpretation of the world of the participant in the context of the study in an attempt to get shared meanings with others. In doing so, it complements the interpretative orientation by giving the researcher the opportunity to explain and describe the phenomenon as perceived by the participants (IIEP, 2003). However, Merriam (1998) argues that to produce a qualitative study, the researcher has to be sensitive to biases inherent in qualitative research. In this respect, LeCompte & Preissle observe that

qualitative research is distinguished partly by ‘its admission of the subjective perception’ and biases of both participants and researcher into the frame (1993:92).

In the next section I discuss the case study as the third design dimension selected for my particular study.

3.2.2 Research method: Case study

I opted to use a case study as an appropriate method in qualitative research. A case study has been described as useful to study a process, programme or individual in an in-depth, holistic way that allows a researcher to get a deeper understanding (Merriam, 1998).

As Merriam states,

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved (p. 19).

Merriam (1998), Stake (2000) and Creswell (2002) each emphasise a case study as a process of investigation to understand a situation. In order for me to understand this study my research addresses the following main questions:

- What educationally related challenges do teenage mothers face in coming back to school?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of teenage mothers in relation to the re-admission policy in schools?

From that above viewpoint I find Patton’s suggestion relevant that a case study is helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of particular people, problems or situations in comprehensive relevant ways (Patton, 1990).

According to Bell (1993), the greatest strength of the case study method is to allow the researcher to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work. In this regard, case study methods help the researcher to identify such features and to show how they affect the implementation

of systems and influence the way an organisation functions. In this light, I use the argument of IIEP (2003:15) that in case study methods, “the events speak for themselves rather than being interpreted or judged by the researcher.”

Cohen & Manion (1994) illustrate a number of advantages of case study methods. I found the idea of “a step to action” very useful to my study: in other words, people begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use for staff or individual self-development for institutional feedback, for formative evaluation and in educational policy-making (Cohen & Manion, 1994). My decision to choose the case study as a research method was in order to provide me with an in-depth perspective of people and behaviour within their individual and social contexts (Cantrell, 1993). Since the purpose of my study is to investigate the educationally-related challenges encountered by teenage mothers, the case study will help me inform the relevant decision-makers and policy makers in the area in which the study is located (Adelman, C., Kemmis, S. & Jenkins, D. 1980 as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994).

3.3 Research context and sampling

3.3.1 Research context

This study is a small-scale interpretive study conducted in Kavango Education Region in the North-Eastern region of Namibia. The focus of the study is on the Namibian policy relating to teenage pregnancy which encourages girls to complete their schooling. I examined educationally-related challenges faced by a group of girls in the Kavango Education Region who returned to school after their pregnancies as a means to better understand the complexities underpinning the implementation of this policy.

The study involves four teenage mothers from the two selected senior secondary schools, four teachers, two school principals and four guardians or parents of the teenage mothers. As an interpretive researcher the sample size was appropriate. As Cantrell (1993) points out, sample size for qualitative research is based upon the purpose of the study, not on specific rules. In this regard I use Anderson’s (1998) argument that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry.

The two senior schools were purposefully selected from a total of six senior secondary government schools in the Kavango Region. One of the senior secondary schools is situated in Rundu, while the other school is in a more rural area. These two schools were purposely chosen because I wanted to compare the experiences of different teachers, learners and principals from urban and rural areas. According to Patton, cited in Cantrell (1993), interpretive research uses small samples or even single cases, selected purposefully to allow the researcher to focus in depth on issues important to the study. Patton (1990) argued that sample size depends on what a researcher wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources.

3.3.2 Sampling

Sampling is the method used to select a given number of people or things from a population (Mertens, 1998). Researchers endeavour to collect information from a small group or subset of the population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population in the context of the study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The study involves four teenage mothers from Grades 8 - 12, four teachers, two school principals of the selected senior secondary schools and four guardians or parents of the teenage mothers. After I explained the purpose of my study to the teachers, they showed interest and volunteered for the study. They wanted to share their thoughts, experiences and opinions regarding the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers.

The four young mothers were selected after consulting the school principals of the two selected senior secondary schools. During the preliminary selection process of the research participants the young mothers who indicated their willingness to be part of the study were between the ages of 17 to 20 years old when they fell pregnant. On their return to schools they were between the ages of 18 to 22 years old. I purposively choose to work in senior secondary schools as my interest is in the barriers that prevent young women from completing their high school education and I felt that the senior girls would be able to articulate the educational-related challenges they face as young mothers. In this

respect, UNICEF (1995:122) points out that the Directorate of Youth within the Ministry of Youth and Sport responsible for identifying the interests of young people in Namibia defines “young people as between the ages of 15 to 30 years”. I therefore regard all the interviewed girls as young mothers in this study. According to Cantrell (1993) and Mertens (1998), qualitative research typically uses small, information-rich samples selected purposefully to allow the researchers to focus in depth on issues important to the study.

3.4 Data collection tools

The nature of my study allows me to collect data through two different research data collection tools: interviews and document analysis.

3.4.1 Interviews

The research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information and focused by him/her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation (Cannel & Kahn, 1968). My study used semi-structured interviews which allowed me to collect rich data.

According to Cohen & Manion (1994), the interview serves as the principal method of gathering information influenced by the research objectives. For Tuckman (1972) as cited in Cohen & Manion (1994), the interview provides access to the mind of the interviewee and makes it possible to understand the perceptions, opinions and thoughts of the interviewee.

However, in contrast to the above, Kerlinger (1970) argued that although research purposes govern the questions asked in an interview, essentially their content, sequence and working are entirely in the hands of the interviewer. For Borg (1963) the direct interaction of the interview is the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique. One advantage is that allows the researcher far greater depth of understanding, while on the other hand it is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewer and the participant. Regarding the latter Lansing, Ginsberg, & Braaten,

1961 (cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994) agree that there are problems surrounding the use of the interview in research which could result in invalidity and bias. They define it as a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction, that is, to overstate or understate the “true value” of an attribute.

In this respect, Cohen & Manion (1994) argue that the sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer and the respondent, the substantive content of the questions, more particularly including the attitudes and opinions of the interviewer towards the respondent, and preconceived notions on the part of the interviewer to what the respondent is being asked. I find the arguments of Cohen & Manion (1994) useful to minimise the amount of bias. They argue for interviewing various role players in the context being studied and they suggest that keeping a constant core of questions will give the interview greater validity.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. According to Bell (1993:94) semi-structured interviews allow the respondents “a considerable degree of latitude”. Even though certain questions were asked, the respondents are given freedom to talk about the topic and give their views in their own time. This is unlike structured interviews, where the respondents are limited to a range of responses previously developed by the researcher. Therefore the semi-structured interview serves as an effective tool in allowing the respondents to talk freely. I was then able to probe specific aspects based on information raised in the questionnaires.

3.4.2 Document analysis

The study focuses more on policy-related matters than document analysis in this context. There are official documents pertaining to re-admission policy and the Education Act, 2001. However, I have also included school exercise books of targeted young mothers and promotion schedules in this study as a means to highlight the issues and challenges the participants face in their studies.

For Lincoln & Guba (1985), document analysis is important because it gives the researcher a general background on the subject that is being studied. Since official records are vital sources of data, it is necessary to include documents which supplement the interviews and observations. The documents were scrutinised and analysed based on my research contextual background as mentioned in chapter one. This was done to get a deeper understanding of the policy and helped me to analyse my findings. It also helped me to verify what is happening in schools regarding the implementation of teenage pregnancy policy in Kavango Education Region. According to Bell (1993), most educational projects will require the analysis of documentary evidence. Therefore document analysis helped me to understand the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in schools.

3.5. Validity and Triangulation

For Bell (1993), whatever procedures for collecting data are selected, they should always be examined critically to assess to what extent they are likely to be reliable and valid. In this qualitative study I am unable to focus on reliability because it is a small case study and the specific context of my study was more particularly concerned with validity. Validity in research tells the readers whether an item measures or describes or produces the same or similar responses on multiple occasions (Bell, 1993). For IIEP (2003) validity in research refers to results being valid in a given setting or in the context in which experiments were carried out or observations were made.

In qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty in reporting, interpreting the depth of experiences, the richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached and interviewed, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; IIEP, 2003). However, also in qualitative data the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives could contribute to a degree of bias. “Interpretive validity” is one of the kinds of validity that enables researchers to interpret the meaning and intentions of the situation (IIEP, 2003:10).

I employed a multi-method approach in collecting data in order to avoid the effects of bias as much as was possible in this qualitative study. Merriam defines triangulation as “Multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (1998:204).

Using triangulation in this study helped me to seek connections in the data collected through different tools and to confirm the emerging categories and themes (Creswell, 2002). Triangulation can be a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). One of the advantages of triangulation is collecting witnesses’ account of an event. For Adelman et al., this is at the heart of the intention of the case study researcher, to respond to the multiplicity of perspectives present in a social situation. Due to this, Adelman, C., Kemmis, S. & Jenkins, D. (1980 as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994) argued that case studies need to represent fairly these differing and sometimes conflicting viewpoints. In the context of this study the selection of the participants reflected a range of viewpoints and I believe provided the necessary conditions for triangulation.

3.6 Data analysis

The analysis of data presented in this study involves reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, and looking for patterns (Cooper & Schindler, 1998). Thorne (1997) defines analysis of data as an explicit step in theoretically interpreting data collected by using specific strategies to transform the raw data into a process form of data. For Bogdan & Biklen (1982) “analysis of data involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what a researcher will tell others” (1982:145).

Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. Furthermore, the categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). This helped me to examine my interview transcripts and documentary notes before identifying the patterns and organising my data into

categories. The findings of my research participants are compared and interpreted according to perceptions, opinions and experiences in order to make meaning. I then compared my interview findings with the data collected through document analysis. This provided me with an opportunity to become familiar with the data by “dwelling with the data” (Burns & Grove, 1997). I considered the anonymity and confidentiality in this study, therefore each participant is given a pseudonym. To avoid confusion of names the learners’ parents or guardian are called by their daughter’s name, for example “NyaMate” means Mate’s mother.

3.7 Research ethics

My particular position within the Ministry as indicated in chapter one qualifies me to undertake this study. However, I ensured that my research participants were willing to participate. As a female researcher, investigating the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning to schools, I ran the risk of injecting my own personality and experience into the study.

A researcher has to be mindful of the ethical dilemmas that confront researchers (Cavan, as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:159) describes ethics:

as a matter of principle the sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Research ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

I respected all my research participants and ensured they understood their rights regarding privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, research responsibility and betrayal of participants. I also informed my participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and they were requested to feel free not to answer questions about which they felt uncomfortable without penalty, risk or loss.

According to Neuman (2000), a researcher has a moral obligation to uphold confidentiality of data, which includes keeping information confidential from others in

the field and disguising members' names in field notes. The research participants were assured that the data collected would be kept confidential and would not be shared with anyone (see Appendix E). Pseudonyms were employed to protect the anonymity of the research participants in all transcripts and reports as mentioned earlier. In this regard, I tried to comply with three major ethical values found in the Ethical Guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (1992):

1. The research ethic of respect for persons states that researchers, in taking and using data from persons, should do so in ways which recognise those persons initial ownership of the data and which respect them as fellow human beings who are entitled to dignity and privacy. In this case, I asked permission from all research participants that we make use of a tape-recorder during the interviews.
2. The research ethic of respect for truth states that researchers are expected to be truthful in data collection, analysis and the reporting of findings. I therefore recorded the data to ensure the true reflection of my findings.
3. The research ethic of respect for democratic values states that the researcher can expect freedom to investigate, ask questions, give and receive information, express ideas and criticise the ideas of others and the freedom to publish the research findings.

I obtained permission from the Regional Director of Education to conduct my research in the region. Before the actual interviews, I ensured that all my research participants understood the purpose of my study and I got their acceptance. Also, the interview questions were discussed with them before the interview started.

3.8 Limitations

As the primary data collection instrument and as a female researcher and novice without any experience in conducting qualitative research, my thinking and experience might have biased my data gathering and analysis. Furthermore, I might have been biased, since I have personal experience of teaching teenage mothers and currently work with these

girls in the region. As Merriam (1998) points out, in a qualitative study, the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analysing data and as such, can respond to the situation by maximising opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information.

Furthermore, the investigator or researcher as a human instrument is limited by being human, for example, mistakes may be made, opportunities may be missed, and personal biases may interfere. In essence human instruments are as fallible as any other research instrument. A further limitation is the fact that this is a small scale study and therefore it is not possible to make any claims for generalisability. This case study rather seeks to illuminate the educational issues faced by these participants as a means for further reflection on relevant policy and its implementation.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides a theoretical framework of the research methodology which I considered as an umbrella of my study. The research design, which includes the research paradigm, qualitative research approach and case study method, underpinned and guided my study. The research setting and sampling was presented and described, and the location where the research was conducted. The procedures for selecting the two senior secondary schools in Kavango Education Region were discussed.

The research tools I used to collect data – interviews, observation and documentary analysis – were described. Validity in qualitative research demonstrated the importance and trust of my study findings. The use of triangulation in collecting data helped me to understand and clarify my assumptions regarding the study.

The data analysis in qualitative research helped me to make sense of the collected data through interviews, observation and documentary analysis. Ethical consideration was taken into account and made me respect my research participants and ensured them of their rights and privacy. In conclusion, the last section of this chapter explained my role as a researcher in this study. In the next chapter, I present the data collected through interviews, observation and document analysis.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study gathered through interviews and documentary analysis. Since the purpose of my study is to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning to school, the findings relate to the following research questions:

- What educationally related challenges do teenage mothers face in coming back to school?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of teenage mothers in relation to the re-admission policy in schools?

The data collected through interviews emerged into categories which were guided by the above-mentioned main research questions. The categories are listed below and this chapter is organised in relation to the categories as indicated:

- Experience of teaching young mothers
- Young mothers in the school environment
- Difficulties faced by young mothers
- The perception of the respondents on the teenage pregnancy policy
- Support provided to young mothers at schools
- An analysis of the academic performance of the young mothers interviewed.

I considered the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study, and so each participant has been given a pseudonym.

The table below indicates the participating schools and the names of the school principals, teachers and learners interviewed.

Table 1. Research participants

Schools	Research Participants
Runone Senior Secondary School (urban)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Karian – The Principal • Mr. Sirumbu – Teacher • Ms. Rukunde – Teacher • Ngoyi – Learner • Nepemba – Learner
Kambongi Senior Secondary School (rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Ndurian – The Principal • Ms. Pau – Teacher • Mr. Shamba – Teacher • Mate – Learner • Maguru – Learner

The parents or guardian of learners interviewed are called by their daughter’s first names e.g. “NyaMate” means Mate’s mother.

4.2 Interview findings

The interview results are presented according to the categories identified above.

4.2.1 Experiences of teaching young mothers

In this section, I present the interview results as reflected by the questions responded to by the teachers and school principals regarding their experiences of teaching young mothers. While views about teaching these girls varied, the school principals and teachers interviewed identified various issues related to the teaching of young mothers who have returned to school.

The first issue raised was that of the perceived status of the young mothers in relation to their peers. All of the participating teachers and the principals from both schools have the perception that young mothers regard themselves as adults among fellow learners. Mr.

Karian, Mr. Shamba, Ms. Rukunde, Mr. Sirumbu and Ms. Pau mentioned that young mothers behave as ‘adult people’ on their return back to school.

Mr. Karian, the principal of Runone Senior Secondary School said that the home environment contributes to such behaviour and attitudes by treating and regarding young mothers as adults. He mentioned the tradition of referring to mothers by their children’s name such as “NyaNdesi” which means Ndesi’s mother and which contrasts with the school tradition which uses first names such as Lilia. This applies to all mothers and they show pride in this as a rule. His perception was that on their returning to school, they expect to be treated differently because of their status as mothers. This, he said, is a challenge to the schools that insist in treating every learner the same regardless of their newly-acquired parental status as mothers. He also indicated that teachers find it difficult to change to this new title.

Maguru from Kambongi Senior Secondary School is being called by her child’s name and she is happy about it. On the same point, Mr. Shamba added that young mothers behave as well as feel like adults among fellow learners. His opinion was that because of this they feel uncomfortable and unhappy at school. In addition, he said that it takes them some time to adapt to the school environment in the capacity of both mothers and learners.

Another issue raised was the fact that young mothers have additional responsibilities that their peers do not have. Ms. Pau felt that the double responsibilities carried by these girls reduce their freedom compared to their fellow learners. Nepemba from Runone Senior School, however, expressed her feeling that at school she feels normal and free like any other ordinary learner but at home she has extra responsibilities as a mother. As she stated, *“If my child is sick I have to be there and look after her. There is no way a mother can be free at home compared to those who do not have children”*.

In this regard Ms. Ndurian, the principal of Kambongi Senior Secondary school, and Ms. Rukunde saw these new responsibilities as a contributing factor to poor attendance among young mothers, especially with regard to afternoon study or extra classes after school. According to them, some young mothers are carrying the responsibilities of motherhood without assistance from parents or guardians. Ms. Ndurian added that because of the huge responsibilities they have, young mothers are difficult people to deal with, being unpredictable and having different moods from day to day.

In this light, Ngoyi supported the principal when she indicated that she does not have time to do her homework or even to study at home. As a result her homework is always incomplete or not done properly. She said that the only time to attend to her schoolwork is during afternoon study if she happens to come. She said: *“I have many responsibilities and I find it difficult to cope. Because of this I am punished for my incomplete homework”*.

Another issue raised by the two principals was the classroom situation concerning mothers. They were concerned that these girls’ concentration was impeded by their situation and this affected their performances in tests and examinations. In addition, this group of respondents also remarked that young mothers are passive participants during lesson discussions. Mr. Karian added that young mothers do not want to make mistakes and that they are careful of whatever they say in the classroom because they are afraid other learners will laugh at them or teachers will pass negative remarks or comments towards them. For instance, teachers may say something such as “a mother can not behave like this”. Nepemba’s fears seem to go well with the principals’ remarks when she says that if she did not answer a question correctly her fellow learners would laugh at her.

She added that their fellow learners expect them not to make mistakes, for instance, they may say things such as “how can a mother give an incorrect answer” or “you better stay at home and bring your child to school rather than yourself”. Her opinion was that their fellow learners regard them as adults not as a learners and as such school is not supposed

to be a place for them. Their fellow learners seem to feel that young mothers are not supposed to be given a second opportunity.

On the same point Ms. Pau, Mr. Shamba and Ms Rukunde from both schools added that some young mothers are not free to participate in lesson activities and they are restless and look worried. Ms. Pau's viewpoint was that they seem to be psychologically disturbed. As a result, sometimes they are off task during lesson presentation. They indicated that some young mothers regularly ask permission to go home to visit their babies who constantly need attention due to either sickness or loneliness. This is made worse by girls who have to leave their children with baby-sitters or others than family members.

I have in my work experiences found that there are young mothers who do not live with their parents therefore their children are left with neighbours. On that same point, Ms. Ndurian mentioned an incident which happened to one young mother in Kavango Region. Her child was being cared for by people she was not related to. One day after school she found her child had died in a bucket of water. This led to that particular girl dropping out of school. I was also informed that some day scholars do not inform the school of their absence if the child is sick. The viewpoints of the two principals were that young mothers take it for granted that the school already knows she is a mother and can have a problem anytime regarding the child.

4.2.2 Young mothers in the school environment

In order to understand the challenges faced by young mothers in the school environment, I invited the school principals, teachers and the selected girls to explore this area with me.

I found that young mothers find it difficult to cope with the school environment because of the hurtful and harmful comments from both teachers and their fellow learners. The young mothers felt that they are not accepted by the teachers, the principals or their fellow learners because of the hurtful and harmful remarks or comments.

The respondents raised various issues which they perceived as negative attitudes. School principals and teacher's opinions were that there is stigmatisation attached to being a young mother at school. Young mothers are called "zali", which means a mother, by their fellow learners. This does not sound good in local languages and it makes a person feel offended.

Mr. Sirumbu from Runone Senior School added that young mothers are shy and full of fear at school. His opinion was that because of this they think that they are not accepted by others. Their fellow learners tease them and regard them as adults. Ms. Ndurian and Mr. Sirumbu from both schools had the same view that the above-mentioned behaviours make young mothers isolate themselves from their fellow learners. *"I have observed that young mothers are isolated and they are always alone on the playgrounds"*, said Ms. Ndurian.

Mr. Sirumbu expressed that at the beginning of the year they are not free at all and are very shy to be among other learners. Young mothers are full of fear and feel uncomfortable. But they adopt the school environment slowly and surely. He added that they are full of fear because young mothers feel that they are not accepted at school then they isolate themselves from others and look unhappy.

I found the responses of the three young mothers (Nepemba, Ngoyi and Mate) confirmed these views. Nepemba and Ngoyi pointed out that their friends are also mothers. *"I do not have a friend and in most cases I am alone"*, said Mate. On the same point, these young mothers expressed their unhappiness concerning the comments of some teachers especially in the classroom. They said that some teachers make comments related to motherhood. Two young mothers from Kambongi Senior School said that if the classmates make noise in the class some teachers say things such as: *"some of you are adult people and have children. You are not supposed to make noise"*, said Mate. Maguru added that sometimes some teachers say things such as: *"why should a mother allow such behaviour to happen in the class"*.

Ngoyi also confirmed the negative responses of some teachers that in the classroom, especially if she wants a further explanation or instructions to be repeated. She said that the teacher's response will be as follows: *"you see the problem of teaching mothers, they do not pay attention to the presentation, you are supposed to stay at home and look after your child or even better to get married"*. They also indicated that their fellow learners tease them or pass remarks which are rather derogatory. They say things such as *"we do not want to see an old woman in our class"*, said Nepemba. Mr. Sirumbu also added that if learners are given invitation letters for their parents to attend teacher-parent meetings then fellow learners say thing such as *"are you also going to inform your parents about the meeting while you are also a parent"*, said Mr. Sirumbu.

The perception of the principal and teachers of Runone Senior School is that young mothers are not well accepted in group situations. Their observations were that if a young mother is mixed with others then her fellow learners will let her do the group activities alone. They said that it seems that their fellow learners want to see whether a young mother is able to do it or not, so that they can laugh at them. I found that young mothers do not participate in extra-mural activities. The view was also expressed that mothers contribute to their lack of participation in extra-mural activities.

Mr. Karian said that some young mothers are under the age of 19 years old but they do not participate in any sport. *"They regard themselves as adults and feel shy to participate"*, said Karian. However, he added that young mothers are getting pressure from other learners especially if they are playing netball, for instance, when playing against other schools then learners from the other school complain that they do not want to play with 'old women'. Ms. Ndurian's viewpoint was that their non-participation was symptomatic of their being isolated.

Two young mothers interviewed confirmed that they do not participate in any extra-mural activities: one said that she has many responsibilities, while the other said that she does not like participating in sport but she likes watching it. The other two young mothers said that they do participate. It seems that principals and teachers want young mothers to be

active participants in both lessons and in extra-mural activities and to socialise freely with other learners.

Apart from the above points, I asked my research participants whether secondary schools are the best places for young mothers to continue with their education. The respondents expressed different views on this aspect. Three teachers from both schools felt that schools are appropriate places for young mothers, while the principals and one teacher were of the opinion that young mothers should go to Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) or attend special schools. Mr. Shamba and Ms. Pau said that some young mothers are rather young, therefore they need to be under the supervision of the teachers. Mr. Shamba said that they also need to interact with other learners. He added that *“since teenage pregnancy is an unplanned thing, they must not be discriminated against because of being mothers”*. Mr. Sirumbu supported the two colleagues in that he was of the opinion that there must be provision to allow young mothers to transfer to other schools where they are not known as mothers. *“I think this may help them to participate freely in the lessons and other school activities”*, he said.

The young mothers interviewed, however, felt that school is the best place for them to continue with their education. They said that this will help them to achieve their career ambitions. *“School is the best place to continue with my education because I learn from my fellow learners,”* said Mate, and Maguru said *“I think the idea of coming back to school will help me to achieve my career.”*

Ngoyi opposed the idea of NAMCOL proposed by some teachers being an appropriate place for them to continue with their education. She said that non-formal education or evening classes are not good for young mothers because of the responsibilities they have. *“I think even though we are mothers, we are still young people and we want to be with our fellow young learners”*, she said. Nepemba added that NAMCOL is an alternative place to go if she has no choice to continue with her education. *“NAMCOL is too costly, thus not all young mothers can afford to do all six subjects either for grade 10 or grade 12 in order to proceed to the next level”*, said Nepemba.

Parents or guardians of young mothers also indicated that schools are the best place for their daughters to continue with education. NyaMate added that NAMCOL is a good idea as well but accommodation would be the main problem to some young mothers who do not have relatives in town or nearby NAMCOL centres. This is why formal education is the best way to continue with their education. Meanwhile NyaNepemba pointed out that young mothers also have the right to be among other young people.

4.2.3 Difficulties faced by young mothers

This section presents the responses from learners, school principals, teachers, and parents regarding the difficulties faced by young mothers on their returning to school. In order to get a deeper understanding of the above-mentioned points, the next set of questions were asked.

The responses to the question of the difficulties faced by the young mothers were analysed. It was noticed that the two girls from Kambongi Senior School focused on the difficulties of getting re-admitted to the school. They described the problems associated with this by saying that the school principal had to be begged to allow them to come back to school. Also, they were sent to the regional education office to obtain approval. I found out that they were re-admitted at a very late stage because priority was given to those who were already in the system. The re-admittance of the two young mothers was based on the availability of space at their school. In contrast the other two girls from Runone Senior School did not experience any difficulties in getting back to school during the statutory year. Both said that on their returning to school their names were already on the class list.

Even though two of the girls did not find it easy to get readmitted, I found that all the young mothers interviewed indicated a high degree of motivation to continue with their education and I wanted to find out exactly what motivated them to come back to school. One key reason mentioned was the difficulties experienced during their staying at home for a year. Mate and Ngoyi shared almost the same things, such as personal problems including lack of financial support. Both girls are taking care of their children alone

without any support from the father of the children. As Mate put it *“I am raising up my baby alone without any support from the father. The father does not visit the child and our relationship ended when he learnt that I was pregnant.”* Ngoyi said, *“My relationship with the father of my child ended immediately when he learnt that I was pregnant. He does not provide any support or visit the child, thus, I am responsible for everything concerning my child.”*

Nepemba was also motivated by the current living standards, however, the father of her child does visit and sometimes he does provide financial support. As Nepemba put it, *“I have realised that life is not easy for uneducated or unemployed people. I want to complete my education, be independent and take proper care of my child.”*

Maguru said that the father of her child does visit but he does not provide any financial support. She added that there is not any challenge at home because her mother does not mind taking care of her child or supporting both of them. Meanwhile Ngoyi added that her decision was also based on her difficult circumstances as a mother and orphan which she finds hard to cope with. They pointed out that these facts motivated them to come back to school with the hope that one day they will be able to support their children and themselves.

All four girls interviewed said that because of the above-mentioned points they do appreciate the second chance given to them to continue with their education. They regard it as a sort of motivation to take their education seriously.

Teachers interviewed from Kambongi Senior School confirmed that some young mothers are well motivated. Mr. Shamba’s opinion was that if a young mother is sure that the parents are taking good care of her child, she will perform well. As Mr. Shamba stated, *“My observation is that young mothers do not waste time and the quality of their work is satisfactory.”* – a view that was somewhat different from those at the other participating school.

Parents or guardians of young mothers were asked to share with me of whether their daughters returned to school of their own will. Two parents indicated that they were part of the decision for their daughters to return to school. As one indicated, *“I felt very bad at seeing her staying at home for a year instead of being at school because my purpose of sending her to school is to study not fall pregnant”*, said NyaMate.

NyaMaguru put it this way: *“I encouraged my daughter to continue with her education because life is expensive.”*

Meanwhile NyaNepemba and Ngoyi’s guardians said that their daughters decided to return to schools by themselves. NyaNepemba stated that it was her daughter’s decision to go back to school. According to NyaNepemba, her daughter realised that the only way to get a better life is through education. As NyaNepemba stated, *“Yes, my wish was that she must go back to school but I did not force her to do so. For me if parents take such a decision without her (young mother’s consent) she might not take her education serious or she might not willing to do all her schoolwork then at the end she may drop out of school. It is better to let young mothers to decide what they want for their own future.”*

Ngoyi’s guardian also said that the decision was made by the young mother herself. *“She came to me to ask for an assistance to look after her child because there is no one who can look after her child in her absence”*, said Ngoyi’s guardian.

4.2.4 The perceptions of the respondents on re-admission policy

This section presents the viewpoints of the research participants on the existing re-admission policy. The questions relating to policy elicited various answers among the principals, teachers and parents including the young mothers themselves. Discussions around the policy revealed that while teachers and principals knew the essence of the policy their views were coloured by their own particular experiences. Teachers and principals did not share anything related to the understanding of the rationale underpinning the policy. They did not see the link between the policy relating to teenage pregnancy generally and the democratic ideals of equity and non-discrimination.

Some areas or sections of the policy were supported by some respondents, while others felt that the policy also encourages teenage pregnancy and it held the young mothers back with their education. The two teachers from Kambongi Senior School and one teacher from Runone Senior School supported the re-admission policy of young mothers.

However, the respondents identified some strengths and weaknesses of the policy. Mr. Shamba, Ms. Pau and Mr. Sirumbu supported the issue of allowing young mothers to stay at home for a year to take care of their children before they can be re-admitted. *“For me, it seems that the policy-makers have realised that the baby needs the love and care of the biological mother,”* said Ms. Pau. Mr. Sirumbu said that it is good for young mothers to stay at home for a year for the benefit of their babies before they can be re-admitted. Ms. Pau and Mr. Sirumbu perceive this as strength of the policy.

For Mr Sirumbu, the weakness of the policy is the issue of not allowing young mothers to be re-admitted at any school where their status is not known. For him, this puts these girls in difficult situations because of the different way they are treated by their fellow learners. As he mentioned previously the other learners tease these young mothers in the classroom regarding their status. In this sense he felt that the regional office should intervene in the re-admission of young mothers and proper counselling should be provided to them before their re-admission. On this subject Ms. Pau expressed the view that the policy disadvantaged young mothers because by the time they resume school they have lost much time.

Mr. Karian, Mr. Sirumbu and Ms. Rukunde blame the policy, saying that to a certain extent the policy gives girls a “passport” to fall pregnant, since they know that after delivery they will be re-admitted into the formal education system. As Mr. Karian put it, *“The policy gives rights to girls to fall pregnant because they are aware that after delivery they will be back to school.”*

During the discussion regarding the policy Ms. Rukunde pointed out that some young mothers are re-admitted to another school where they are not known within the given timeframe of stay at home. Ms. Rukunde said *“Those girls are often absent from school.”*

She was of the opinion that re-admission of girls should be examined because of the advantages taken by some young mothers to transfer to another school. She further suggests that there must be communication between the schools regarding the re-admission of girls.

Karian said that the teenage pregnancy policy is difficult to implement and that the policy discriminates against some learners. For instance, the issue of allowing pregnant girls to write examinations is not fair to some extent. He gave a scenario where one girl was taken out of school in May 2006, the other one in September 2006, but both have to come back for examinations. His view was that the girl who was taken out of school in September had learnt a lot, while the other one had learnt nothing even though she kept the textbooks. He felt that this is contributing to a higher failure rate of girls.

When asked for their views about the re-admission of young mothers, the issue of the twenty-one (21) year age restriction was raised. Mr. Shamba did not support age as one of the conditions for readmission. As he said, *“I think since the policy allows them to stay at home for one year after delivery, it would be better to re-admit them regardless of their ages in order to continue with their education.”* I found however that this was not a uniformly held view and that young mothers above twenty years old are not re-admitted easily. Mr. Sirumbu pointed out that his school follows the policy but if a young mother is above twenty years old they hardly ever re-admit her. As he further added *“young mothers who are above twenty years old are re-admitted but in most cases this depends on the availability of space in the school”*, said Mr. Sirumbu.

The two principals also commented on the issue of the re-admission of young mothers. Ms. Ndurian said that she has a problem with the policy on the re-admission of the young mothers. She argued, *“Yes, the government together with the parents including young mothers themselves want to continue with their education in the formal system, but in reality these girls are not able to cope. As it was already mentioned earlier, they are rejected by their fellow learners”*. Regarding the above view, she and Mr. Sirumbu had the same feeling that young mothers should be permitted to transfer to any school where they are not known. Ms. Ndurian felt that young mothers should be re-admitted to any

school of their choices or wishes within the region where their status is unknown. For them, the new environment might help young mothers to participate freely without any fear of being teased or rejected by others.

Mr. Karian's view was that the re-admission policy is not clear. According to him, one girl may leave in June 2006 which means that June 2007 will constitute one year of exclusion. He said *"the school does not know whether she can be re-admitted in July 2007 or must wait until January 2008."* He added that many young mothers and parents make use of this opportunity to come back to school, even though it is in the middle of the school year. For him, the school principals use their own discretion in not admitting them till the coming year. *"What the policy says is that a young mother qualifies to be re-admitted at any time."*

During the interviews with young mothers, two of them – Mate and Nepemba – were asked to share their views on the Teenage Pregnancy Policy regarding re-admission and they showed their appreciation of the re-admission policy. Nepemba supports the re-admission policy, saying: *"I think the policy-makers have realised our educational rights. We also have a future like other learners who do not have children and getting a child while schooling is a mistake. My dream is to move from "nobody" to become "somebody" in my life. Because currently I have nothing means that I am nobody but if I will complete my education and start working then I will be somebody to support myself and my child."*

Mate raised her concern regarding the way young mothers are treated on their returning to school. She put it in this way: *"the policy says that after one year of delivery, a young mother has to be re-admitted to school. But on their coming back to school we have to beg the schools for re-admission and they send us up and down to the regional office, put us on waiting lists or calling parents. I fail to understand why the school has to treat us in such a way."*

Various suggestions were made to improve the policy. Mr. Karian and Mr. Shamba felt that the Teenage Pregnancy Policy should be revisited. For Mr. Karian the policy is not

clear, as he stated in the scenario he gave earlier. He further added that the policy would be better if it stated what the school should do in terms of providing counselling or guidance to young mothers when they are back in school. In addition, he said “*since the Teenage Pregnancy Policy was introduced recently and teachers were / are not trained on how to deal with these young mothers, then, basic counselling should be included in teachers training (in-service and pre-service training)*”. Meanwhile, Mr. Shamba felt that the policy should allow young mothers to return back to school regardless of their ages because otherwise it disadvantaged some girls.

4.2.5 Support provided to young mothers at schools

During the interviews, I found that schools are not providing any support to young mothers on their returning to school. The respondents felt that something should be introduced at schools. They suggested support which could be helpful to young mothers to cope with the challenges or difficulties encountered at schools. Ms. Ndurian and Mr. Sirumbu felt that young mothers should be guided and counselled before they are re-admitted to school. According to them, this will help young mothers to cope with the difficulties experienced on returning to school. Ms. Pau said that counselling should continue for longer than just prior to re-admittance.

The above-mentioned respondents felt that there should be regular girls’ meetings including young mothers to encourage them to take their education seriously. Their perceptions were that the problems experienced by young mothers could be identified in such meetings and solutions could be found to help them. I found that there is a girls’ club at Kambongi Senior School where all girls meet every two weeks and the aim is to empower them to realise the importance of girl child education. Ms. Pau felt that a girls’ club could be mutually beneficial to all the girls, saying “*young mothers are not willing to share their experiences with others. They are just there to listen to others. Sometimes they feel very uncomfortable to be in the girls’ club because it seems that they think that they do not fit.*” If however the clubs are organised to include discussions around the issues and challenges of teenage pregnancy she believes they can have an important role to play in addressing this issue.

Mr. Karian and Ms. Rukunde said that while there are some teachers assigned to do basic counselling to all learners, they are not equipped to help young mothers. These teachers were seen to lack the know-how to deal with young mothers, thus they suggested workshops should be conducted for these teachers.

Mr. Karian felt that there should be cooperation between parents, schools, learners and the regional school counsellor. According to him, this may help parents and young mothers to understand that school is for learners and whoever comes to school will be treated the same.

Ms. Rukunde felt that some young mothers should be exempted from paying school fees. Mr. Sirumbu suggested that hostels should create special rooms for the hostel's pregnant girl boarders where they could attend their study times.

All four young mothers interviewed stated that schools do not provide any support to them, and three of the young mothers felt that schools should provide support. As Mate said, schools should provide moral support or guidance to them so that they are able to cope with the challenges experienced at schools.

Meanwhile Ngoyi responded that teachers should understand their situation as mothers that have many responsibilities. For her, *“teachers should not punish us if homework is not done; instead encourage us on how to cope with our problems or challenges”*. She further added that counselling programmes should be introduced. Nepemba's opinion was that if proper guidance was provided at school, it would help other girls not to fall pregnant. She put it this way, *“we need encouragement from those female teachers who have had the same experiences and still completed their education.”*

On the same point I found also that parents want to see schools put more effort in encouraging girls to take their education seriously. As NyaNepemba states, *“female teachers should talk to girls including young mothers to discourage them to fall pregnant.”*

The interviews revealed that the respondents view teenage pregnancy as a serious concern in the region. In considering the educational challenges of these learners the respondents appeared not to have previously given a great deal of thought to this particular aspect of the widespread problem in the Kavango. In the following chapter I reflect on these responses in greater detail and attempt to unpack the views presented.

4.3. An analysis of the academic performance of the young mothers interviewed

The aim of this section is to focus on the individual work of the young mothers interviewed. I looked at their performance in tests as well as the preliminary examination results (promotion schedules) of this year. Since my purpose was not to analyse the whole grade (i.e. Grade 12) at school, I simply analysed their August examination results compared to their fellow learners in the class.

In the case of Mate, a Grade 12 learner, I looked at her exercise books in various subjects such as Rukwangali, English, Biology, Development Studies, Environmental Studies and Agriculture. It was discovered that her homework was always complete, up to date and correctly done according to the instructions. A look at the promotion schedule of August 2006 shows that Mate performed satisfactorily compared to her fellow learners in the class. Her highest symbol was a B grade and F was her lowest grade. When comparing Mate to the rest of her classmates, she could be regarded as an average performing learner. The lowest performing learner obtained 17 points in the five best subjects and the highest got 34 points, while Mate obtained 23 points.

In the case of Maguru, a Grade 11 learner, her exercise books in various subjects such as Rukwangali, English, Biology, Development Studies, Geography and Agriculture showed that her homework was also complete and up to date according to the instructions. Her August 2006 examination results showed that Maguru performed fairly well in her subjects compared to her fellow learners in the class. Her highest symbol was a B grade and G was her lowest grade in her six subjects. She could be regarded as slightly above average compared to the other learners in her class. The lowest performing learner

obtained 0 points in the five best subjects and the highest got 30 points, while Maguru obtained 23 points in her five best subjects.

In the case of Nepemba, a Grade 10 learner, her exercise books showed that her homework in various subjects such as Rukwangali, English, Maths, Physical Science, Life Science, Geography, History, Business Management and Agriculture are always complete and also up to date. The promotion schedule of August 2006 showed that Nepemba performed well in her nine subjects compared to her classmates. Her highest symbol was a B grade and G was her lowest. She could be regarded as an average performing learner in comparison with others. The lowest performing learner obtained 11 points and the highest got 39 points in the six best subjects, while Nepemba obtained 22 points in her best six subjects.

Finally, in the case of Ngoyi, a Grade 10 learner, her exercise books showed that some of her homework in various subjects such as Rukwangali, English, Maths, Physical Science, Life Science, Geography, History, Business Management and Agriculture, is sometimes incomplete and or incorrect. The incomplete homework means that the task was not done as expected, while incorrect means it was wrong or off the topic. Her performance in comparison with her fellow learners in the same class showed that Ngoyi performed below average. Her examination results in August showed that her highest symbol was a D grade and her lowest symbol was a U grade. A U grade means an upgraded level because the mark was below 10%. She could be regarded as a below average learner compared to other learners in the class. The promotion schedule showed that the highest learner in Ngoyi's class obtained 27 points and the lowest got 9 points in the six best subjects, while Ngoyi obtained 13 points in her best six subjects.

Even though the teachers and principals complained in general that the homework of young mothers is always incomplete and their performance drops because of motherhood, the analysis of the exercise books of the three targeted young mothers revealed a rather different picture to that pointed out by the teachers. The performances of three of the four young mothers showed satisfactory results.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the different opinions of the research participants on various themes as indicated in the introductory section. There are various issues raised in relation to the teaching of young mothers. A number of issues were emphasised, such as the way young mothers are perceived with regard to motherhood status, their responsibilities and the impact of motherhood status in the classroom situation. It was also found that the comments from both teachers and other learners make it difficult for young mothers to cope with the school environment, and that some young mothers faced difficulties in getting re-admittance to the schools. There were different perceptions on the re-admission policy and the rationale underpinning the policy was not brought forth. I also found that the overall performances of these girls varied. It was found that there is a difference between what the teachers said during the interviews and what the documents show. I found that three girls are performing satisfactorily and only one is performing below average. The next chapter presents the discussion of my findings with an aim of interpreting the meanings thereof.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter is to determine whether my research goal has been appropriately addressed and the main research questions answered. More explicitly, my research goal was to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by young mothers in returning to schools. I highlight the lessons learnt from this case study in terms of questions and issues raised by the results of this small scale study. The data presented in the previous chapter mostly falls within the two main issues, that is, the educationally-related challenges and the perceptions and implementation of the Teenage Pregnancy Policy (TPP), specifically the re-admission part.

Firstly, I focus particularly on the educationally-related challenges faced by young mothers. This includes change of status, the double responsibilities, the quality of work of the young mothers and group acceptance. Then I focus on the second main issue which is the perceptions of my research participants towards the re-admission policy and the implementation of re-admission policy of the young mothers. Finally, I present the synthesis of the research results in relation to a review of the literature. This includes the similarities, differences and new insights drawn from the study.

5.2 The educationally-related challenges faced by young mothers in schools

5.2.1 Change of status

First the study revealed that the teachers and principals tended to emphasise the view that the girls returning to school regarded themselves as adults and wished to be treated as such, however the girls did not raise their status as being an issue. The challenge here is to assess what is at the heart of this. On the one hand, there is a cultural connotation associated with motherhood where the mother is perceived as being an adult member of the society. The above result was in line with the Lema (1997) finding as stated in chapter two that in Tanzania, a girl is regarded as an adult after she has given birth and she is expected to assume adult responsibilities. In this sense it is a view that is assumed

by the school community. On the other hand it may also be based on the behaviour of the girls returning to schools and a view that is based on the interpretation of the girls' attitudes and actions. Another interesting dimension of this particular view is that the teachers indicated that the girls see themselves as adults which is not borne out by their fellow learners viewing them as adults as there did not appear to be any evidence that showed that these girls were accorded the same respect given to adults. Rather, the sense was that the girls were at times teased and or set apart by their peers. So too there is evidence that the teachers were ambivalent about this so-called adult status as they did not necessarily treat the girls as adults.

Another perception raised was the passive participation of these girls in lessons and in extra-mural activities, which is also a challenge to these girls. However, the findings revealed that motherhood seemed not to be the only contributing factor but attitudes of fellow learners and their teachers towards them appeared to have a connection to their passiveness. It remains a challenge to these girls to overcome the negative attitudes. As Mate stated, some teachers say things such as "some of you are adult people and have children you suppose not to make noise".

The data revealed that the expectations of teachers towards young mothers seem to be that these girls have to play a role of adulthood in the classroom due to the cultural association. This in effect would be a challenge to these girls who must realise that they have to lead by example among their fellow learners. This could contribute or lead to state of confusion as they would not know what else to do.

The viewpoint expressed by SENT (2005) is that negative treatment contributes to a poor relationship between teenage mothers and their teachers. It appeared, from the available data, to be a factor affecting the performance of the learners and their initial ability to settle into the group. This is a vital argument that needs to be considered at all levels of school authority. There is a need for teachers to treat all learners equally regardless of their status. In doing so, this may help young mothers to realise their democratic rights to be among others.

Perhaps more importantly is the associated view that the teachers are not supportive to these girls and do not give them sufficient encouragement. The girls felt hurt by this and it exacerbated their difficulties. As Nepemba stated, “*We need encouragement from female teachers who have undergone the same experience as we do and who have completed their education*”. The view expressed by Boulden (2001) who argued that for girls who become mothers in their teens and are not encouraged and supported to remain at or return to school to complete their education, the chances for them to build a hopeful future are slim, is a lesson that needs to be learned from this study.

The issue raised regarding the perceived status of the girls, however, would seem in the context of these two schools that in essence the girls are perceived differently by their peers and their teachers. This perception of ‘difference’ is a challenge to the girls at these schools because it affects the relationships between the girls and their peers and with their teachers. Research in both developed and developing countries (chapter two) reveals that the issue of difference stems from a variety of factors that are mainly socio-cultural in origin and that it is articulated variously depending on particular cultures or societies. What was particularly interesting is the sense that this difference is seen as some sort of threat. In the reports studied certain schools saw these young women giving the school a bad name, ‘tarnishing the image’ of the school. In this study the sense of a threat being posed was there but was more covertly shown and revealed itself in the teachers of one of the schools viewing the girls’ presence as setting a bad example to the others. The issue of status therefore is made interesting in that it is something of a smoke screen that teachers and even learners hide behind to mask their particular prejudices.

Given the evidence, it would seem that there is a need for those in authority, myself included, to spend time with teachers and young mothers before they return to school to re-orientate the girls and to work through this particular aspect with the teachers. It would also seem to be necessary to broaden the issue of teenage pregnancy education to include discussions related to relationships and attitudes.

5.2.2 Double responsibilities

The study revealed that teachers and principals held the view that the huge responsibilities these girls face make the teaching and learning activities more difficult. The girls also raised the issue of many responsibilities as a stumbling block and as something that prevented them from fulfilling the demands of school work. The evidence showed that the responsibilities of being young mothers reduce their freedom compared to their fellow learners. In this sense, the views of teachers and principals were that this makes them look worried and unhappy and not to feel free as others. As Ms. Ndurian stated, *“it is not easy to teach young mothers because they are difficult people to deal with, they are unpredictable and they have different moods day-to-day”*. The interpretation of the different moods was based on the difficult experience of raising their babies or to carrying full responsibilities as mothers and as learners.

In the same vein the view was held that these girls find it difficult to cope with the double responsibilities. Teachers and principals tended to accentuate the view that double responsibilities of school and parenthood results in poor results and in their not doing their homework, as well as in poor attendance among these girls. However, the document analysis shows a different perspective. The study revealed, as shown in chapter four, that the work of three of the four girls when compared to their classmates was satisfactory. Equally, analysis of the school register revealed that the days each of these girls were absent was less than 14 days in total for both the first and second school terms. However, the evidence did show that there was poor attendance during afternoon study time among these girls. Another aspect was that mothers who are day-scholars find it difficult to attend afternoon study and extra-classes which are scheduled after school hours and this does not apply to girls who are resident in the hostels.

The assumption in this view is the fact that because young mothers cannot afford the service of babysitters then it could be that after school they have to be with their babies. It seemed from the available data to be a fact that some parents are not really willing to assist these young mothers. As Nepemba pointed out, *“If my child is sick I have to be always there and look after her. There is no way a mother can be free at home compared*

to those who do not have children.” She added further that *“We want to complete our education”*. This is an indication that despite the double responsibilities these girls are determined to pursue their education.

Given Nepemba’s comment, I found from this study that mothers who are day-scholars have many more responsibilities compared to their fellow mothers who are hostel boarders. The view expressed by the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) confirms the experiences of these girls in showing that teenage mothers face problems of organising their new lives, to manage their role as mothers and also to meet the demands of school.

Another issue related to this was that young mothers do not inform the schools if they are not going to attend school when their children are sick. In this sense, the principals tended to take the view that these young mothers take it for granted that their absenteeism has to be related to their responsibilities; however, this was not borne out by the girls. The findings found by the SENT (2005) were that some teenage mothers do not have access to phones in order for them to keep in touch with school if they are going to miss classes. Given the evidence, there seems to be a need to consider other facts that make it impossible for these girls to communicate with the schools. It could also be that they do not have access to a phone. This is something which principals should consider rather than prejudging these girls.

The interpretation of this data is that teachers and principals believe that these girls are affected psychologically by their dual roles as mothers and learners and they ascribe the girls’ restlessness and unhappiness to this. The evidence shows that there are many things that can be linked to this perception. One of the contributing factors is that in the minds of these girls they are unable to fully trust the caregivers. A further issue raised by certain teachers is a lack of concentration of young mothers during their lessons. The preoccupation of these girls was ascribed to periods when they were particularly worried about their babies and appeared to be more prevalent among day scholars than girls in the boarding establishment. It would seem that girls who are in boarding, because they have less contact on a day-to-day basis with their children, are better able to cope. This must

be regarded cautiously however as this study could not investigate other issues that these particular girls face by being separated from their children.

This case study revealed the issue raised by some of these girls that the fathers of their babies are not providing any support and that their relationship ended the moment their boyfriend learnt that they were pregnant. This resulted in these girls having to take the full responsibility of parenthood. This situation was also found in Canada, and the report consulted as mentioned in chapter two showed that the majority of teenage mothers assume their family responsibilities alone because the fathers of their babies left prior to the birth of the babies and they do not provide any support nor have they shown any concrete commitment as fathers (Canada. Ministry of Education, 1998). This sense of abandonment exacerbates the problem of having to assume dual responsibilities and is not improved by their lack of financial independence.

This study shows that the young mothers interviewed have realised that the double responsibilities are not easy to carry. The issue of dual responsibility as indicated by this study has a number of implications for the continued and successful education of these girls. Essentially what is underscored here is that it is not enough simply to have a sympathetic policy in place, there is a need for support structures to be in place. Researches from other parts of the world such as Russell, Lee Faye, & the Latina Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workgroup (2004), Boulden (2001) and Berry & Lennon (1998) and reports such as the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), Policy Studies Institute (1998) and the US Department of Health & Human Services (1998) have emphasised how crucial support structures of one another sort are, as mentioned in chapter two.

In the context of this study, this issue pointed to the fact that there is a need for these schools to see how best the time schedule for extra classes can accommodate these girls. Other strategies need to be put in place that will go some way towards easing the burden of motherhood and schooling for these girls. It must be noted, however, that this must not be seen only as the responsibility of the school. Parents, who seem unwilling to assist, have to be informed about the consequences of the double responsibilities of these girls' academic performances. Parents or guardians need to be encouraged to be supportive as

much as the schools and the teachers and even the girls' peers need to. Also there seems to be a need for parents and schools to be aware that having these girls carry the full responsibility should not be seen as a deterrent to them from falling pregnant again. In fact research from other parts of the world such as US Department of Health & Human Services (2000) would seem to indicate the opposite, and that mothers who are not encouraged and supported to complete their schooling are more at risk of subsequent pregnancies.

5.2.3 Quality of work

This study revealed that there are many contributing factors that could be related to the quality work of young mothers. I found contributing factors include aspects such as home environments which can encourage or discourage them to perform well or not, the learning abilities of young mothers, the effort they put into their school-related activities, and their interest towards school, as well as various aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The SENT report (2005) found that young mothers faced day-to-day barriers to continuing with their education because they are often behind with their schoolwork even though they try to catch up during weekends, and in some cases they work very late in the evening to meet the deadlines

This study showed how the four girls differed in terms of their performance. The data collected revealed that the homework of three girls (Mate, Maguru and Nepemba) was completed and up to date but this was not the case with Ngoyi. The quality work of Ngoyi seems to verify what was mentioned by teachers, as the findings show that she did not finish her homework as expected. The analysis of the August examination results also revealed that three of the four girls were coping as average students.

Not all of the teachers interviewed blamed motherhood as a major contributing factor to the low performance of young mothers. Their argument was that the quality of work of young mothers depends on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, learning abilities, effort and interest of the individual to school-related activities. Ms. Pau emphasised the fact that all learners have different learning abilities. Her interpretation was that if a

particular young mother was good before she became a mother she will still be the same but if she was a below average learner before becoming a mother she will be the same.

Apart from the abovementioned viewpoint, the issue of the home environment was also raised as one of contributing factors to their performances. Mr. Shamba argued that if a particular young mother knows that her parents or guardians are taking good care of her child she will perform well, and vice versa. The view expressed by Bergsmann (1994) and Girls Incorporated (1996) argued that by the time teenage mothers re-enter the system, they are always behind with at least one Grade level compared to their peers, and this results in their developing a negative attitude about and lack of self-confidence in their own ability to master academic skills.

Another issue raised by Ngoyi was that she was being punished for her incomplete homework. The interpretation of this girl's view seemed that she found it difficult to balance the demands of school work as well as fulfilling the demands of motherhood. As Ngoyi stated, she finds it difficult to cope: "I am punished for my incomplete homework". However, the issue of punishment was not raised by the teachers or principals. They only indicated that the homework of young mothers is always incomplete and they have many excuses, for instance they forget their exercise books at home.

Given these results, it would seem that the stereotypical view of teenage mothers as poor scholars is more complex than the interviews with some of the teachers revealed, and even those in some of the research reports from other parts of the world such as Boulden (2001), Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004), SENT (2005), UNESCO (1996) and CEDAW 2000 as cited in UNESCO (2003). Once again these data seem to indicate the need for support that is both tangible and emotional. The fact that certain of these girls have been shown to perform well when they have been motivated bears this out.

5.2.4 Group acceptance

The study revealed that the perceptions of teachers and principals tended to blame the attitudes of other learners that make young mothers' stay at school difficult. However, the available data seems to be that both teachers and other learners tend not to accept these girls. The issue raised by both teachers and principals was the fact that these girls face difficulties, which make them feel uncomfortable. The interpretation of the above viewpoint was that consequences contribute to the isolation of young mothers. As Ms. Ndurian stated, young mothers are called as "Zali" by their fellow learners which makes them feel offended. Looking into the detail of the concept of "Zali", which means a mother, it seems that the approach of calling them "Zali" sounds unfriendly and unacceptable. Another issue raised by the girls was that their fellow learners tease them, and it seems that these young mothers might realise the intention or the reason behind these jokes is meant to hurt them.

The evidence of this study revealed that young mothers are not accepted on their return to schools but it was found that this started when these girls were pregnant. This was underscored by the IRINNews report (2005) that revealed different viewpoints of the students at the University of Namibia, with the male students expressing different feelings towards pregnant girls and or teenage mothers. The boys felt that schools are not places for young mothers and their opinion was that these girls are adults.

Another interesting issue was that one girl tended to emphasise her complaints concerning the attitudes of her fellow learners, while the other girls' concern was about the teachers' comments and or remarks. The studies done in Canada and in Kenya, including that of McCauley-Brown (2005) revealed similar challenges faced by teenage pregnant girls, and also those young mothers who dropped out of school due to harassment in the school environment.

The data collected show that teachers and principals raised the issue that these girls tend not to socialise with other learners. The lack of socialisation between young mothers and others seems rather to be based on these girls feeling that they are not accepted. However,

the opinions of these girls seemed to be that they wish to socialise with others but because of the attitudes of others this is not possible. This seems to be overlooked by the teachers and principals. This is a challenge for these girls because they want to be accepted by both teachers and fellow learners.

The findings found by Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) and Boulden (2001) revealed that teenage mothers who return to schools suffer from stigmatisation, ridicule and abuse from both teachers and other learners. This resulted in those teenage mothers in Australia dropping out of schools (Boulden, 2001). This study demonstrated that not only Namibian young mothers, particularly in Kavango region, suffer from stigmatisation.

The Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) argued that in Canada, teenage mothers faced enormous challenges that affect all aspects of girl's life such as personal, family, social and school life. This was also found in this case study. The issues raised in this section are yet another indication of the socio-cultural prejudices that these girls are faced with in the context of the school. Once again they point to the issues that exist between and policy and practice in this regard.

5.3 The perception and implementation of the Namibian TPP (Teenage Pregnancy Policy)

The following section considers the results concerning the participants' views on the perception and the implementation of the TPP. This study was primarily concerned with the policy in relationship to re-admission of teenage mothers to school and did not look at the TPP as whole.

5.3.1 The perception of the respondents on re-admission of young mothers

The policy as mentioned in chapter two states that “after delivery the girl has the right of re-admission to the same school within twelve months of the date on which she left school, irrespective of her age”. The TPP further says that a girl has the option, within the same period, to return to another school provided that space is available (Namibia. MBESC, 2001c:4).

The views about this part of the policy varied among the respondents, as indicated in chapter four. The first thing that emerges in these findings was that the re-admission policy is not consistently applied. The results of the study showed that even at the two schools that were part of this study, the inconsistency of the policy was noticed. The perceptions of the respondents were based on their practical experiences. There were mixed feelings among the respondents towards the re-admission of the young mothers to school: some respondents seemed to be happier about it than others.

Another perception was that there is no provision within the policy to allow young mothers to be re-admitted to the school of their choice. This is, however, a misconception as the policy states clearly that a girl has the option to return to any school she chooses if space is available. However, the evidence shows that this kind of arrangement is not taking place. Some respondents do not seem to be fully aware about the whole policy. However, the document analysis revealed that there is a bureaucratic route involved in transferring learners which makes it difficult for young mothers to be re-admitted or transferred to just any school. According to the Education Act, 2001, section 33 states “the Permanent Secretary must advise a parent in writing of any learner transferred from a state school to another”, and it says that the Permanent Secretary must advise a parent in writing of any learner transferring from a state school to “another state school” (Namibia. MBESC, 2001b:16).

In addition to the above-mentioned, the latest Circular (form ED.2/ 2006) states that learners who are in schools where the next Grade is available should be encouraged to stay at those schools except in cases where parents move from one region to another (Namibia, MOE, 2006). It seems that this adds to the difficulties of young mothers being re-admitted to another school.

Another issue raised was that respondents supported the time-frame given to young mothers after delivery. However, there were mixed feelings among teachers, principals and parents regarding the period of staying at home after delivery. Teachers’ viewpoints were that these pregnant girls regard one year of resting at home as a punishment. As Ms.

Rukunde states: *“those girls do not feel one year of staying at home as a punishment or something bad that which affect their education, but see it as a maternity leave”*. This is contrary to what the policy says. The policy states that the provisions are not intended as a form of punishment, but as recognition that a pregnant girl has taken other responsibilities which must be given attention, (Namibia. MBESC, 2001c. It seems that there is a misinterpretation of the policy by some teachers because the intention of the policy-makers was recognition of the new responsibilities assumed by these girls rather than punishment.

The study once again revealed that some teachers and principals believe that the policy, particularly the re-admission of the young mothers, seems to be regarded as a “passport” giving permission for girls to fall pregnant. The interpretation of their viewpoints was that this in turn contributes to a higher rate of teenage pregnancy in the region, in the sense that these girls know that after delivery they will be re-admitted into the formal education system. As a result, some teachers and principals were against the re-admitting of young mothers into formal education, and were of the opinion that young mothers should be restricted to non-formal education. They felt that this measure would discourage learners from becoming pregnant with the intention that this would be a lesson to others which could reduce teenage pregnancy among learners. However, the girls opposed the idea of continuing their education with non-formal education because it is too costly since they have double responsibilities. Also the study revealed that girls felt that they must not be denied a second opportunity to formal education because of their status.

Boulden (2001) found that pregnant and young mothers are enrolled in the Tasmania Open Learning Service because of their circumstances. This view supports the idea that young mothers have to decide themselves where they want to continue their education.

The study also revealed that the rationale underpinning the re-admission of young mothers was not well understood by the stakeholders in education. For me the idea of the re-admission of young mothers means that Namibia is serious with the education of girls. According to Davies (2004), the Shadow Minister for Women requested politicians to

take the issue of teenage pregnancy seriously and not to be judgemental. These point to the same conclusion that teachers and principals and some parents and other stakeholders in education should not be judgemental but should try how best they can address the issue. It must be the responsibility of each stakeholder in education to help young mothers to return to school.

5.3.2 Implementation of the re-admission of young mothers

The study revealed a picture of the two schools in so far as the TPP is implemented. The respondents indicated the implication in the implementation of the policy. The first issue raised by some teachers was the age restriction as one of the conditions in the re-admission of young mothers which was found to be contrary to the policy. The policy states that “a girl has the right of re-admission to the same school within twelve months of the date on which she left school, irrespective of her age” (Namibia. MBESC, 2001c:4). The available data show that young mothers who are above twenty-one (21) years of age are re-admitted based on the availability of space. One girl raised her concern regarding the way they were treated on their returning to school. Mate stated *“the policy says that after one year of delivery, a young mother has to be re-admitted to school. But on our coming back to school we have to beg the schools for re-admission and send us up and down to the regional office or put us on waiting list or send us to call our parents. I fail to understand why the school has to treat us in such a way”*.

The interpretation of the above views raised by both teachers and learners seems to be that there is a confusion concerning the policy regarding the admission of learners to schools, particularly those who are more than twenty-one years old. According to the Namibian MBESC, (2001b) Education Act, 2001 (Act No. 16 of 2001), section 23 (5) states “A person who is older than 21 years of age may not be admitted to any Grade in a state school, unless such person had already been enrolled in a state school the previous year and was promoted to the next Grade. It is however stated that such a person “be admitted to adult education referred to in section 67 of the Act or proceed with his or her education with a private education institution”.

Given the evidence, Mate is one of these young mothers interviewed was above twenty-one years of age, which could be the reason why she was sent up and down to the regional office for approval. It seems that schools have a fear of re-admitting these learners without the involvement of the regional office because of different policies in place and the Education Act, 2001 that talks about admission of learners. The view expressed by the girls is that the school mistreated them or they are not wanted back at school. These findings show that there is a disjunction in the formulation of the TPP policy and the Education Act.

Another concern raised was that the re-admission of young mothers as stipulated in TPP is not clear. The data collected in the interviews were analysed in line with the TPP which, as stated earlier, is that a girl has to return to the same school within twelve months of the date on which she left school. In this sense the scenario given by one respondent, as mentioned in chapter four, and what the policy says show the difficulties of implementing the policy effectively. This is a challenge to school principals as the time these pregnant girls leave school is unpredictable and varied. It seems that the issue raised by the principal that some parents or young mothers use such opportunities to come back to school at any time as long as they have stayed at home for twelve months should not be seen as such for the fact is that parents are following what is rightly stipulated in the policy. As a matter of fact, from practical experience, it is obviously difficult to re-admit a learner in the middle of the year considering the amount of work covered prior to the re-admission. The evidence appeared to be that the policy has weaknesses which those in authority might not have realised.

5.4 Synthesis of research results in relation to literature review

This section provides the main findings achieved in this study in relation to what has already been done in other countries as well as in Namibia regarding research on teenage pregnancy. In doing so, I focus on the similarities, differences and new insights about teenage pregnancy that has added to my understanding of the issue.

5.4.1 The similarities drawn from this study

This small scale study affirmed a number of issues raised by previous research. These include:

- The issues related to social behaviour found by Gillham (1997), Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), Boulden (2001) and Loignon (1996) were confirmed in this study. Other issues, such as social exclusion of the young mothers as found by Social Exclusion Unit (2002), Boulden (2001) and Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), came out in this small-scale study. The challenge faced by young mothers as mentioned by the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) affect all aspects of a young woman's personal, family, social and school life, as was also revealed in this study.
- Even though general deductions cannot be made in this small-scale study, some findings such as harassment in and outside the classroom, especially on the playgrounds, were confirmed.
- The parents support for the continuation of young mothers' education was seen to differ from country to country. For instance, UNESCO (1996) states the parents' feelings of not seeing a need to let the young mothers continue with their education. In Namibia, particularly in Kavango Region, parents play an important role in encouraging their daughters to return to school after giving birth.
- Findings by Osler, Street, Lall, & Vincent (2005) regarding the invisibility of girls at school were also found in this study.
- Other findings confirmed in this study were that of SENT (2005), which revealed different treatment experienced by the young mothers. Stigmatisation as found by Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003), Boulden (2001), Harrison (1990) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004) was observed in this study. However, in this small-scale study no evidence was revealed that stigmatisation causes young mothers to drop out of school.

- The findings by the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) about the difficulties these girls experience in group activities and their isolation has been revealed in this study, but not that of the reduction in the quality of their work, with the exception of one young mother as indicated earlier.
- The negative attitudes on the part of schools, as stated by Bucuvalas (2002), SENT (2005), Canadian Ministry of Education (1998) and Tjombonde (2003), appeared to have some substance as indicated in this study. The perception of teachers and learners towards young mothers as found by the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (2004), Boulden (2001) and Mitchell & Halpern (1999) was also substantiated in this study.
- The issue relating to the perceived change of status of young mothers mentioned by Lema (1997) and IRINNews (2005) has also been revealed in this study.
- The problems associated with the re-admission of young mothers were found in both developed and developing countries as mentioned by Nyambura (2000), UNESCO (1996), UNESCO (1998), Boulden (2001) and Namibian MBESC (2001). This shows that these countries have realised the educational rights of young mothers, and that is why they have put the TPP policy in place to allow young mothers to be re-admitted in schools. This was shown to be similar in Namibia, particularly in the two schools where the study was conducted. The implementation of the re-admission of young mothers still remains a problem, as found by Tjombonde (2003).

5.4.2 The differences drawn from this study

Certain findings of the previous research either differed from or could not be confirmed in this small scale study.

- The issues related to poverty as found by researchers such as Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), Robin Hood Foundation (1996), US Department of Health and Human Services (2000), Berry & Lennon (1998), Mokgabalone (1999) and

Boulden (2001) as a contributing factor to teenage pregnancy could not be confirmed but the financial difficulties experienced by these girls as stated by Boulden were revealed in this study.

- Other issues related to social behaviour as revealed by the Robin Hood Foundation (1996), such as that social behaviour causes young mothers to remain single for the rest of their young adult years, was not confirmed in this small-scale study.
- Also the finding revealed by Samuels, V. J., Stockdale, D. F. & Crase, S. J. (1994) that social exclusion contributes to high school drop out among young mothers as stated in chapter two was not found in this study.
- The findings on limited career opportunities such as lower qualifications noted by other researchers and reports such as McCauley-Brown (2005), Tipper (1997), Robin Hood Foundation (1996), SENT (2005), Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), US Department of Human and Human Services (2000) and IRINNews (2005) were not proven in this study. Because this is a small-scale study which did not investigate the performance of the girls before they became mothers, it is very difficult to judge from other research findings that state that these young mothers end up with lower qualification which will result in their having fewer job opportunities. The findings by McCauley-Brown (2005) are however in contrast with the findings in this study, in the sense that young mothers in the two schools are more motivated after the experience of giving birth and they seem to take ‘revenge’ by studying hard. This was shown in this small-scale study in the analysis of their August examination results and their daily activities as mentioned earlier.

5.4.3 The new insights drawn from this study

The section looks at the additional insights about the issue being studied that added to my understanding.

- This study found that young mothers are no longer called by their first names but rather by the names of their children, for instance “NyaNdesi” meaning Ndesi’s mother. This happens because of the cultural practices and beliefs of the Kavango people towards somebody who has a child as a mother. Another insight was the way other peers referred to young mothers as “Zali” which is slang for ‘mother’. However, this is a provocative word which always hurts young mothers when used against them.
- In addition, this study has revealed that young mothers are not provided with any moral, emotional or mental support from the schools. However, the respondents have realised the importance of rendering support such as counselling and guidance to young mothers before they return to school. Other research by Berry & Lennon (1998), Russell, Lee Faye & the Latina Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workgroup (2004), Roye & Balk (1996), Nyambura (2000) and Boulden (2001) and reports of the Canadian Ministry of Education (1998), Social Exclusion Unit and US Department of Health and Human Services (2000) stated the importance of providing support to young mothers and mentioned types of educational support that young mothers need in order to continue with their education.
- An important insight gained from the study was based on the conflicting views of and inconsistencies in implementing the policy.
- I also gained a far better understanding of the actual needs of these girls in my particular professional context through having the opportunity to speak and listen to them.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has broadly enabled me to have a better understanding in relation to my research area and I have drawn some similarities, differences and new findings in doing this small-scale study. The next chapter sums up and gives an overview of the study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a critical overview and reflection of the study that includes what prompted the research and the value of doing it. A critical reflection of the selected research design and the research process is given. In addition, an overview of the key findings and the lessons learnt from this study, as well as the limitations thereof, are given. Finally, tentative suggestions for actions and future research on the basis of the research area are made.

6.2 A critical overview of the study

The following sections provide an overview of the research process and research design findings as a means of reflection and to highlight what I believe to be the primary dimension of the study.

6.2.1 An overview of the research design

This section reflects on how the selected research design contributed to the success of this study. This is a qualitative study and was conducted within an interpretive paradigm, which afforded me the opportunity to understand the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers through the process of interacting with my respondents. Through this, exploring their views and experiences of the topic were investigated in a manner that I believe enhanced the richness of my data.

Even though I used a small sample of participants, it allowed me to engage them at length in meaningful conversation to probe more deeply in order to understand their personal perceptions, experiences and opinions. For me, the interaction with them at a personal level helped me to identify and make meaning of their responses in relation to my research area.

I believe that the knowledge and understanding I acquired from this study, considering my professional work, puts me in a better position to support and provide helpful strategies to schools in as far as how best all of us can address the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers.

In addition, in spite of this being a small-scale study, I also found it useful because I have managed to generate detailed and valid data that helped me to understand how the two schools interpret and implement the re-admission policy of young mothers. Therefore, I hope, the results including the lessons learnt from this study will better inform those in authority. Lastly, the small scale study has enriched me deeply, which I think could not have been the case if I opted for a bigger survey.

6.2.2 An overview of the research process

The interviews were conducted in our mother tongue, so the follow-up went well and there was no misunderstanding. Use of the mother tongue allowed my respondents, especially parents and learners, to express themselves freely during the interviews. The approaches I used to inform my respondents about the purpose of my research were good since their interest in participating in this study was evidently aroused. The purpose of my study was made clear to the interviewees, and I assured them of the confidentiality and anonymity as stated in chapter three. My respondents were reminded to feel free during the interviews and were told about their rights to not answer questions about which they felt uncomfortable without penalty, risk or loss.

However, travelling long distances to visit parents was time-consuming. Some appointments were delayed because my respondents had other commitments. It was not easy for the girls' parents to accept me because they did not know me. The interview programme with the parents was scheduled to suit the free time of the young mothers, so that the girls could introduce me to their parents.

I found it difficult to translate some words into English or into the mother tongue, for instance, there is no difference between the meaning of the words “challenges” and “difficulties” in our mother tongue. In order to convey the information or questions to my

respondents clearly I used the word “problem” which is synonymous with the two above-mentioned words. I asked the respondents, especially the teachers or principals, to use English when necessary. The two research methods I employed in this research were very useful and supplementary to one another, and the triangulation methods helped to address the issue of validity as I was able to check and cross-check information

6.2.3 An overview of the findings

A key result of this study was that young mothers are perceived as different. This essentially means that the girls are treated differently by teachers and their peers. The significance of this study seems to be that there is a need for teachers and learners to come to terms with the needs of young mothers and to learn how best they can respond to them. Equally, young mothers need to be orientated before coming back to school.

The dual responsibilities of young mothers was further emphasised in the results. The findings showed that both responsibilities of mothering and school decrease the young mothers’ freedom in comparison with other learners and this causes young mothers to suffer from depression, anxiety and isolation when they do not feel free to interact with other learners. Another significant finding was that the increase of both responsibilities forces young mothers to make a choice between attending school, extra-classes and afternoon study, for instance if they attend morning classes, then they devote the afternoon time to attending to their babies. Given the evidence at hand, this showed that these girls find it difficult to cope with their new lives. This is seen as a concern which needs mechanisms to support young mothers in their desire to complete their education. In order to assist these girls to fulfil the demand of schoolwork, stakeholders in education have to come up with strategies to accommodate young mothers in a variety of ways.

This study illustrated that worry and distraction at school increase when they leave their babies at home. It was also found that the breaking up of relationships between some of these young mothers and their boyfriends further disadvantages the babies because young mothers struggle to support their babies without any assistance from the fathers. This was not found to be happening to girls in the Kavango Region alone, but also in other parts of

the world such as Canada, as it was stated in Canadian Ministry of Education study (1998) that fathers of babies are often uncommitted to their responsibilities.

One of the criticisms generally made regarding young mothers coming back to school was that the quality of their work drops and they are unable to cope with the demands of the school. However, the study's results revealed the difference between the expectations and the reality of young mothers' quality work. In fact, three of the four targeted girls were able to keep up with their school work. Despite the various perceptions raised by the respondents that motherhood has an effect on the performance of young mothers, the study found that there are many variables contributing to learners' performance. Although this is a small scale study, the issue of these learners' achievement is far more complex than simply the result of their returning to school after the birth of their children.

Another significant result found in this study was that of stigmatisation of young mothers at school. Stigmatisation was learned to be a universal issue that affects young mothers negatively and results in isolation of young mothers compared with findings revealed by other research done in countries such as Australia (2001), Kenya (2000) and the report in Canada (1998) as mentioned in chapter two. This study regards the above as a challenge for these girls because becoming a young mother seems to be unacceptable in the school community.

Furthermore, the results showed that there is a problem in the implementation of the re-admission of young mothers. There is a gap between theory (what the policy says) and practice (what is happening on the ground). The evidence showed that the policy is not well understood or interpreted and not effectively implemented. Another considerable result showed is that the policy has weaknesses which make its implementation difficult. There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation tools as well as lack of intervention from those in authority.

In addition, it was found that age is taken into account in the re-admission of young mothers, which is contrary to the TPP. However, the study revealed that the Education Act, 2001 also outlines the guidelines to admission of learners. The policy on re-

admission of young mothers indicates age free restriction while the Education Act, 2001 section 23 (5) emphasises age restriction as one of the condition of admitting learners. This showed that the TPP was not incorporated into the Education Act, 2001 which was approved later than TPP. Given the evidence as mentioned in chapter five, the schools seem not to know whether to implement re-admission as stipulated in the TPP or as in the Education Act, 2001. Regardless of this being a small scale study, it has shown that such a situation makes the practical implementation of the TPP concerning the part of re-admission of young mothers difficult for schools.

6.3. Lessons learnt from this study

From the complexity of the issues I have learnt from this study that I cannot make assumptions about the young mothers' behaviours, attitudes and work. Firstly, this study has broadened my understanding of challenges faced by young mothers, their behaviours and attitudes. I have learned how different variables, such as the relationship between young mothers, their fellow peers and teachers, play a role in the new lives of young mothers at schools. Another lesson learnt from this case study is that stigmatisation among young mothers causes isolation, as was revealed in both developed and developing countries. Even though this is the situation, those in authority can learn from what is being done in other countries to intervene and address this issue in order to help young mothers.

Secondly, I have learned that like any other individuals, young mothers have differing needs; therefore, varied support needs to be provided to cater for their unique, individual needs. Counselling and guidance was emphasised as one of the most necessary forms of support that young mothers need before returning to and during their stay at school. Having learned that, I have realised the importance of Boulden's (2001) view aiming at supporting and encouraging young mothers to remain at or return to school to complete their education. Boulden's view serves as a wake-up call to all stakeholders in education, including myself, to work towards identifying strategies on how best we can support young mothers to realise their dreams and become fully-fledged scholars. Finally, I have

learned that it is important for an interviewer to be patient and friendly in order to create a platform for obtaining valuable data.

6.4 Limitation of the study

As mentioned earlier, the data was collected through interviews and document analysis. This resulted in a number of limitations. This small scale study is regarded as a unique case in the sense that it is the first of its kind in Namibia in relation to teenage pregnancies. The study focused on a limited number of research participants. This could result in the possibility of errors and bias regarding the perceptions of the respondents, in the sense that they may only decide to share information or experiences concerning the young mothers that they thought I was interested in hearing.

Secondly, as a small scale study one cannot make any statements and predictions with confidence. What this study can do is to sensitise stakeholders in education regarding the dilemmas that teenage mothers face when they return to school. Therefore, the results revealed in this small scale study may not be generalised to all young mothers, including schools.

Thirdly, the use of observation as a tool in this study, which was not done, could have further enriched my data.

Finally, since I am a female researcher and novice in conducting qualitative research, the process of conducting this research was a challenge and I might have been sympathetic in dealing with the real problems of girls, even though I tried not to be biased by using my personal experience of teaching young mothers and in light of my current work in the region dealing with schools.

6.5. Tentative suggestions for action and future research on the basis of the study

As previously mentioned, this is a small scale study and so I was not able to generalise the findings, therefore I have identified possible actions and suggestions for further investigation on the basis of the study. The reason for this is to give insight into what might help stakeholders in education for the benefit of these young mothers.

6.5.1 Possible actions

The following areas were brought to light by this study which needs some actions to be taken by those involved in education.

As stated earlier, there is a need for teachers and learners to realise the needs of young mothers and learn how best they can respond to them. Induction courses should be designed and conducted that can help teachers deal with young mothers, and young mothers have to be orientated before they return to school.

Secondly, there is a need to provide counselling and guidance to young mothers during their stay at school. Teachers should be encouraged to be supportive in order to help young mothers to overcome the challenges they face.

Thirdly, the schools should recognise the dual responsibilities carried by young mothers. The schools must see how best they can accommodate them in their extra-classes schedule. Also there is a need for the schools not to expect day-scholar mothers to participate in extra-mural activities.

Fourthly, the regional office should intervene and address the issue of re-admission of young mothers and come up with monitoring and evaluation tools, and proper assessment and follow up should be done.

Finally, this study suggests that policy has to be re-visited for the benefit of both schools and girls. Also there is a need to educate all stakeholders about the policy, the rights and the responsibilities of each and every one involved in education to ensure that the policy is consistently applied and effectively implemented.

6.5.2 Possible areas for further investigation

The knowledge acquired from this study is not complete, since it did not provide a full picture of educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning to schools. I hope, however, that it can be regarded as a stepping stone for further investigation.

It was found that there was a discrepancy of opinions among teachers and principals regarding the concentration of young mothers during lessons. This needs further investigation because it was difficult to prove in this study since these girls were not observed during lessons.

There were various perceptions raised, for instance, that of motherhood having an effect on the performance of young mothers. Since the findings of this small-scale study regard the issue of these learners' achievement as far more complex than simply the result of their returning to school, there is a need for further investigation in order to come up with concrete evidence regarding their performances.

6.6 Conclusion

This research has discussed the educationally-related challenges encountered by teenage mothers on their return to school. Since the research participants contributed their own perceptions regarding the above research area, the findings have provided increased insights into the perceptions held about the issue of teenage pregnancy which is of so much concern both in Namibia and elsewhere. The high incidence of teenage pregnancy is seen to be a factor that has serious implications for gender equity and has implications that are not only social, but also economic and political. This study has been an attempt to inform me about an issue that I have to confront constantly. I believe, however, that the findings of this study have the potential to sensitise my fellow colleagues and those in authority to the particular challenges these girls face in our society so that our policy becomes meaningful practice.

APPENDIX A (i)



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KAVANGO REGION

Telephone : (066) 2589111
Fax number : (066) 2589213/ 2589320
Reference :
Enquiries : Ms. L. M. Shaningwa

Private Bag 2134
Rundu
Namibia
Date: 27 March 2006

To: Mr. A. M. Dikua
Regional Director of Education

Subject: **Request for permission to conduct educational research at the two senior secondary schools.**

Dear Sir,

I am Lilia, M. Shaningwa, currently enrolled for a masters degree in General Education Theory and Practice with Rhodes University, South Africa. I finished my first year course work in 2005 and now I would like to start the second part of the degree requirements, which is research thesis. The investigation will start from April 2006 to June 2006. I intend to interview two teachers, two teenage mothers and their parents/ guardians (mothers) and the principals of the selected senior secondary schools.

The purpose of my research is to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in their returning to school.

Therefore, I am requesting permission to involve the two selected schools: Kambongi and Runone Senior Secondary Schools (not real names) in my research project. The schools will be informed in writing upon receiving your response.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Yours in Education

L. M. Shaningwa

Ms. L. M. Shaningwa
Education Planner (Academic Affairs)

Date: 27.03.2006

APPENDIX A (ii)



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KAVANGO REGION

Telephone : (066) 2589111
Fax number : (066) 2589213/ 2589320
Reference :
Enquiries : Mr. F. Kapapelo

Private Bag 2134
Rundu
Namibia
Date: 31 March 2006

Attention: Ms. L. M. Shaningwa

RE: Permission to conduct educational research at the identified schools

Referring to the letter dated 30 March 2006, regarding the research to be conducted at the identified schools Kambongi and Runone Senior Secondary Schools (not real names).

The office of the Regional Director of Kavango Region highly appreciates your initiative to investigate in such a crucial area. We believe that the findings of your research will be helpful for the benefit of the teenage mothers and the schools, particularly the schools in the region.

I therefore grant you the permission to carry on with your research.

Wish you successful work.

Yours in Education

A.M.Dikuua
Mr. A. M. Dikuua
Regional Director

Date: 31.03.2006

APPENDIX B



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KAVANGO REGION

Telephone : (066) 2589111
Fax number : (066) 2589213/ 2589320
Reference :
Enquiries : Ms. L. M. Shaningwa

Private Bag 2134
Rundu
Namibia
Date: 30 March 2006

TO: The School Principal
Kambongi and Runone Senior Secondary School (Not real names)
Kavango Education Region

Subject: AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATIONAL RESEACH

Referring to our face-to-face conversation which took place on the 28 March 2006 regarding the involvement of your school into my research. You are hereby informed that your school is identified to participate in my research. The purpose of the research is to investigate the educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning to schools. I will involve two teachers, two young mothers and the principal self in this study.

Thank you so much for your acceptance to be part of my research

Best regards

L.M.Shaningwa
Ms. L.M. Shaningwa
MED: (GETP) Student

Date : 30.03.2006

APPENDIX C (i)



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KAVANGO REGION

Telephone : (066) 2589111
Fax number : (066) 2589213/ 2589320
Reference :
Enquiries : Ms. L. M. Shaningwa

Private Bag 2134
Rundu
Namibia
Date: 31 March 2006

To: Mother/ Guardian

Subject: Request for permission to involve your daughter and yourself in my research

Dear Parent/ Guardian

I am L. M. Shaningwa, an employee in the Ministry of Education, Kavango Region, currently enrolled in Masters of education with Rhodes University in South Africa.

I would like to start with the second part of my study requirements, which is research thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate educationally-related challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning to schools.

Then, with your permission I want to involve your daughter and yourself in this study.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you so much for considering my request.

Approved / Disapproved

.....
Signature

.....
Date

APPENDIX C (ii)
(in Rukwangali)



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

KAVANGO REGION

Telephone : (066) 2589111
Fax number : (066) 2589213/ 2589320
Reference :
Enquiries : Ms. L. M. Shaningwa

Private Bag 2134
Rundu
Namibia
Date: 31 March 2006

Ko: Vareti / Vatekuli

Ehundiro ni hamesere vana (vakadona) kumwe none mekona-kono

Apa nyame L. M. Shaningwa murugani gomoumonisitili werongo pomukunda ntambo Kavango. Pwa ngesi ame kwa li tjangesa kosure zepeguru ko univeresiti zaRhodes moSouth Africa.

Sitambo se kona-kona eli kuna hamena maudigu merongo aga ava gwanekere nago vadinkantu –kadona ava vakara novana metenguro lyawo kosure, konyima zehampuruko.

Moku gwana mwauzera nina hara kurugana kumwe novanona veni kumwe none hena. Ano eyi ngayi horoka moku mu puragera mapuro.

Tani pura epulisiro kweni moku hameseramo vana veni yimo tupu na nyaamweni hena ngoso.

Tasi hafesange sene muna yimpanda neruganeno kumwe lyewa.

Mpandu unene ketamburo ehundiro lyange.

Nhi

Hewa

.....
Esaino

.....
Mazuva

APPENDIX D (i)
RHODES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Lilia, M. Shaningwa

1. How old were you when got your baby?
2. Who is taking care of your baby since now you are at school?
3. How old you were when came back to school and how old the baby was by that time and into which Grade you were returned when you come back to school after the birth of the baby?
4. What are some of the difficulties you are facing at school in generally?
5. How did you find coming back to school after the birth of your baby, was it easy or difficult to get back to school? Could you share these experiences with me?
6. What are your feelings about being given a second chance?
7. What you have found to be most difficult and (in terms of doing your schoolwork such as home work, tests and examinations) how do you organise your time?
8. What do you enjoy most about being back at school?
9. Do you enjoyed being back with your friends; have you made new friends since coming back to school; have you still got the old friends?
10. How do your friends treat you at school?
11. Do you enjoy the challenge of learning again?
12. What made you decide to come back to school after the baby was born? Are you glad that you came back? Why or why not?
13. Do you think being at school is the best place for you to continue your education?
14. Do you think the idea of being back at school helps you to achieve your career and ambitions? What do you hope to do when you have completed your high school?

15. What are the challenges you are experiencing being back at school? Will these challenges affect you achieving your plans for the future?
16. What are the challenges you face linked to your relationship with your teachers?
17. How do teachers treat you as a mother?
18. Do you feel that being at a school or even the same school you attended before the baby was born is working out? What do you think would have been a possible alternative to completing your schooling?
19. How do you think the school could support you and other young mothers more or better, what things would you like to see being introduced?
20. What about the challenges at home, if any?

APPENDIX D (ii)

RHODES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Lilia, M. Shaningwa

1. What is your experience of teaching teenage mothers?
2. Do teenage mothers cope with school environment?
3. What difficulties do they face at school?
4. What do you think the challenges are that they have to overcome in terms of their performance, the quality of their work, and the relationships with their friends, their involvement with their peers?
5. How do you compare the behaviour / attitude of teenage mothers and others who do not have children in terms of discipline?
6. What are your comments on the existing teenage pregnancy policy as well the re- admission of teenage mothers in school?
7. Do you think that something should be done about this teenage pregnancy policy? If so what to be done?
8. Do you think that the school is doing enough to support these girls, what is being done and what more could / should be done?
9. What are teachers' responsibilities to support these girls?
10. What is your opinion about the appropriateness of your high (secondary) schools as places for teenage moms to attend?
11. Any thing else that you want to tell me?

APPENDIX D (iii)

**RHODES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Lilia, M. Shaningwa

1. What are your comments on Teenage Pregnancy Policy?
2. Whose choice was it to have your daughter return to school after her delivery?
3. Now that your daughter had returned to school, have you noticed any changes, for example whether she is coping with her schoolwork?
4. What challenges and difficulties is your daughter facing at school?
5. Can you tell me more what exactly happened before delivery at school?
6. Are you satisfied with the way the school supports your daughter?
7. Do you think the school is the best education institution for her to be since she is a mother?
8. Anything else that you want to share with me?

APPENDIX E
RHODES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY: Lilia, M. Shaningwa

I.....agree to participate in the interview of this study on the basis that I volunteered for the study and that I have the **right** to freely withdraw from the interview of this study at any time and have the **right** not to answer questions about which I feel uncomfortable without **penalty, risk** and **loss**.

The researcher has explained to me in comprehensive terms the nature and purpose of the study and how the data results) will be used.

I will remain **anonymous** in the study and the raw data from interviews will remain **confidential**. The researcher promised to use “**pseudonyms**” in the report or thesis. The research or information obtained will not be used to disadvantage me. There are no other persons other than the researcher and myself who will have access to the raw data.

.....
Signature of participant
.....

Place where interview conducted
.....

Date: Consent Form completed

(For Researcher’s use only)
.....
Signature
.....
Signature

Witness
Date.....

Date.....

APPENDIX F
RHODES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT FOR LEARNER (Mate)

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Lilia, M. Shaningwa

Introduction: You have agreed to participate in the interview in my study and I am requesting you to feel free and remember that you have the **right** not to answer questions about which you feel uncomfortable without **penalty, risk** and **loss**. Allow me to repeat the purpose of the study is to investigate the educational challenges faced by teenage mothers in returning back to school. Therefore you have to be opened during this interview.

Interviewer: How old were you when got your baby?

Respondent: I was 22 years old.

Interviewer: Is your child a boy or girl and how old is he / she?

Respondent: My child is boy and he is 1 year old.

Interviewer: Can you tell me, who is taking care of your baby since you are now at school?

Respondent: My mother is taking care of my child.

Interviewer: In which grade were you permitted after delivery?

Respondent: Actually, I felt pregnant when I was in Grade 11 and I was allowed to sit for my end of year examination, after delivery I started in Grade 12.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more how it happened for you to sit for your end of year examination? Did you stay in the hostel?

Respondent: I was not allowed to stay in the hostel when I felt pregnant, I stayed at home but the school permitted me to come for my final examination.

Interviewer: Sorry to take you back, can you explain further, when you stayed at home did you attend your classes in order for you to sit for your final exams?

Respondent: No, I was not allowed to attend classes when the school found out that I was pregnant, I was told to go home but the school gave me all the textbooks for my subjects to study on my own.

Interviewer: Very interesting, how did you experience studying on your own?

Respondent: It was not easy but I tried hard because I did not want to repeat my Grade 11.

Interviewer: Yes, tell me once again, for how long did you stay with your baby before you came back to school?

Respondent: I stayed with my baby at home for one year.

Interviewer: Hmm! Since you have stayed at home for a year, tell me how did you find it coming back to school? In other words, did you find it difficult or easy to come back to school? If it so, why?

Respondent: Yes, it was not easy for me to be re-admitted into school. First of all, after delivery I informed the school about it and the school told me to come back after a year. To my surprise when the school re-opened I came as I was told but the school principal refused to re-admit me.

Interviewer: Hmm, so what happened then and what did you do when you were told that?

Respondent: I went back home to inform my mother about it, then my mother and I came again to see the school principal. He refused to re-admit me. After a long discussion, he referred me to the Regional Education Office to get a registration form for admission. My mother and I decided to talk to the Director of Education about my problems and also to ask about the form. I explained my problems to the Director. Unfortunately, there is no such kind of registration form for those who dropped out of school or Grade 12, the only form issued at the Regional Office was for those who qualified to Grade 11, especially students from NAMCOL. After the discussion, the Director wrote a note to the school principal to re-admit me. So I decided to see the principal at his home. After I briefed him about what I was told from the Regional Office I then gave him the note from the Regional Director. The principal told me to see him at school the next day. The next

day I was told that the school principal told me that priority was given to those who were already in the system; He told me to come back after two days to see whether there is space available. Thus, my re-admission was based on the availability of space at school, especial in Grade 12 classes. Yes, after two days I went back to school then I was re-admitted.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me how you and your mother felt about all what happened?

Respondent: I felt very bad, disappointed and unhappy because I wasted my mother's money of running up and down for almost four days (home to school and home to school). In addition, I did not know why the school principal refused in the first place since I kept informing the school at all time, so to say. Yes, my mother was not happy about the way I was treated by the school during registration. She worried too much and she failed to understand why the school hesitated to re-admit me since I stayed at home for a year.

Interviewer: What are your feelings being given a second chance? Do you think this is the best thing for you?

Respondent: I felt happy to get a second chance to continue with my education. It was a good idea because I had experienced lot of difficulties at home during pregnancy and after delivery. This encouraged me to go back to school.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what you found to be the most difficult and (in terms of schoolwork, home work, tests and examinations) how do you organise your time?

Respondent: I have not found any difficulties with my school work or doing home work, writing tests or examination. I have my personal time-table which I follow. After evening study time I used to read and prepare for the next day. This is really helping me a lot. In addition, I attend vacation classes in town which helped me to understand my subjects.

Interviewer: What do you enjoy most about being back at school?

Respondent: I am enjoying learning because my returning back to school is a kind of motivation to me.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy being back with your friends; have you made new friends since coming back to school; have you still got the old friends?

Respondent: Actually all my friends and fellow colleagues have completed Grade 12 already. This makes me to feel bad whenever I think of my former classmates and friends because there was a competition in our class. There were clever learners in our class so I wish to be with them in order to study hard since it was a challenge and motivation, so to say. The current classmates are not really good compared with the former classmates. I am alone at times and concentrate on my schoolwork. I have new friends.

Interviewer: How do your friends treat you at school?

Respondent: I do appreciate the way the girls are treating me compared to boys. Boys are using bad words such as some you are an old woman, why are you here? You suppose to stay at home and continue breastfeeding your child instead of coming back to school. It makes me unhappy and I feel very bad but I do not respond to them.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy the challenge of learning again?

Respondent: The challenge of learning, I can say that time spend on afternoon study is not enough, because we have only two hours, so I make use of that time, and never waste time. I use to spend most of that time to study then after study I have to continue reading until finish my topic. For me I learnt a lot within that limited time.

Interviewer: What made you decide to come back to school after the baby was born? Are you glad you came back? Why?

Respondent: My decision on returning to school was based on the difficulties I experience during my staying at home. I suffered a lot. My mother found it difficult to support me and my child. These difficulties motivated me to realise that schooling is the only solution for my personal life. In addition, as I already said that I dropped out of school when I was in grade 11, so this encouraged me to come back to school in order to complete my senior education.

- Interviewer: Do you think being at school is the best place for you to continue your education?
- Respondent: Yes, the school is the best place for me to continue my education because I used to learn from other learners.
- Interviewer: Do you think the idea of being back at school is helping you to achieve your career and ambitions? What you hope to do when you have completed your high school?
- Respondent: I think the idea of coming back to school will help me to achieve my career because after the birth of my child I'm so motivated to study hard. I want to complete my Grade 12 and pursue my education at tertiary level.
- Interviewer: What are the challenges you are experiencing being back at school? Will these challenges affect you achieving your plans for the future?
- Respondent: I believe that all the above-mentioned challenges will never affect my study except if my child is not feeling well. However, the negative attitudes of my fellow learners will never affect my study. I use to ignore whatever the fellow learners are saying.
- Interviewer: Do you also participate in extra-mural activities?
- Respondent: Yes, I do participate in sport. I like playing netball and even before my pregnancy.
- Interviewer: What are the challenges you face linked to your relationship with your teachers?
- Respondent: The relationship between teachers, I can say that sometimes is good and bad. In the classroom whenever the classmates used to make noise the teacher's remarks or comments hurts me so much. They use say such thing as some of you are adult people and have children. So you suppose not to make noise. I do not make noise and I fail to understand why teachers like to make such comments. I am not happy about these types of comments, I think teachers make these comments intentionally just to hurt us young mothers.
- Interviewer: How many young mothers are in your class?

Respondent: Yes, we are two in our class but my colleague is not known by the classmates or school at large because she got her child when she was at primary school. My case is well known to the school because I felt pregnant at the same school.

Interviewer: How do teachers treat you as a mother?

Respondent: Apart from the above-mentioned points regarding the negative remarks and comments, coming to punishment or ask questions during lesson presentations they treating us the same.

Interviewer: Do you feel that being at a school or even the same school you attended before the baby was born is working out? What do you think would have been a possible alternative to completing your schooling?

Respondent: I feel that being at the same school where I attended before my baby was born is a good idea because teachers know me that I am a mother, even though I find it hard to be permitted to visit my child but sometimes they do understand my problem concerning the child if he is sick.

Interviewer: You mentioned that sometimes you find it hard to be permitted to visit your child. Do you find it difficult to get permission? What is your opinion on that?

Respondent: Yes, it is not easy to be permitted once you tell the school the truth that you want to go and visit the child. In most cases I use to lie to the school. I think the school suppose to understand our problems if our children are sick rather than comment that what you are going to do if the child is sick, or sometimes they said that you will be released if the child will be hospitalised. The school should understand that once a mother is told that the child is sick we do not concentrate well on our schoolwork.

Interviewer: How do you think the school could support you and other young mothers more or better, what things would you like to see being introduced?

Respondent: Actually there is no support provided by the school. I think the school should to provide moral support or guidance to young mothers on how to cope with the negative attitudes of our fellow learners, e.g. by saying that we are old woman or we suppose not to come back to school etc. This

contribute to some young mothers to high absenteeism from school or not performance well because everyday you will be unhappy. Therefore, I want to see counselling programme to be introduced in schools to encourage us young mothers on how to cope with the challenges faced at school especially negative attitudes which is really demoralised us mothers. I hope this kind of programme will help many of young mothers not to be discouraged or drop out school.

Interviewer: What about the challenges at home, if any?

Respondent: I have experienced many challenges at home by raising up my child alone without his father. The father does not provide any support or visit the child and our relationship ended when he learnt that I am pregnant.

Interviewer: Do you have anything you want to share with me?

Respondent: I have realised that having a child while you are still a learner is not a good thing or easy thing because I find it difficult to cope with too many responsibilities as young mother and as learner. I always think of my child. There was a day I called home they told me that the child is fine but he was sick. This makes me to worry so much because of it better to wait till you have completed your education.

Interviewer: What are your comments on the existing teenage pregnancy policy?

Respondent: I think the existing policy is very good because it give young mother enough time to breastfeed the child for one year. This is good for health of the child than leave the child after few months old which may cause health problem. However, I am not happy the way young mothers are treated on our returning to school. Since the policy says that after one year of delivery young mother have to be re-admitted, I do not see the point of sending us up and down to regional office or put us on waiting list or calling parents etc.

Interviewer: Do you have something to say again?

Respondent: No, Thank you very much.

Interviewer: *Thank you very much for your time.*

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