

NARRATIVES OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that 'NARRATIVES OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE' is my own work and that all the sources used have been acknowledged.

.....  
LLOYD CHAURIKA MABHOYI

.....  
DATE

## **DEDICATION**

Through this thesis, I want to remember all the disadvantaged students and children I have worked with in my different roles in education and social welfare.

I specifically devote this work to my late father, Comrade Ellison Nherera, ‘Boy Mutema’ Mabhozi, who I miss dearly. ‘Baba’, I vividly remember your inspirational company on my first journey to Nzvimbo Primary School, where I also enjoyed the company of my now late brother, Shepherd. That was the rehearsal for what has since turned out to be a long, lonely distance run without both of you and my late mother, Plaxcedes.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the experiences of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District, Zimbabwe. At-riskiness is defined as a condition in which students are likely to produce poor academic achievement, irregular school attendance, grade retention or dropout due to various individual and social factors. At-riskiness has increased in Zimbabwe's school population since the adoption and subsequent failure of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which has contributed to poverty and concomitant poor social conditions. A literature study explored at-riskiness in the light of socio-cultural perspectives on at-riskiness and also discussed contextual factors in the Zimbabwean schooling system which influence students' vulnerability to at-riskiness. A qualitative inquiry using a narrative approach explored at-riskiness in the life stories of three male and three female secondary school students attending two selected schools in Chitungwiza, an economically deprived area close to Harare. Selection of schools was based on high levels of absenteeism and sustained poor performance in the national school leaving examinations. Purposeful participant selection was based on school records on grade repetition, absenteeism and poor behaviour. Semi-structured Interviews with participants, based on the Dan MacAdams framework for life story research, were used to gather rich data. Ethical compliance included written parental consent and participant assent and the assurance of anonymity, confidentiality and the right to refuse information. Findings were categorized under family related factors, school related factors and resource limitations. At-riskiness was exacerbated by parental unemployment, poor socio-economic conditions at home and a lack of cultural capital. Participants were compelled to undertake casual work to supplement household income in addition to the fulfillment of academic responsibilities. Poor school conditions comprising poor discipline and unprofessional teacher conduct increased at-riskiness especially among female participants. Resource limitations included poor nutrition, lack of basic necessities required for personal hygiene, in adequate parenting and the absence of psycho-social support mechanisms. Based on the literature study and empirical inquiry, recommendations were made for a more inclusive educational model, poverty alleviation and special support for disadvantaged students to reduce at-riskiness among students in Zimbabwe.

Key words: educational at-riskiness; Economic Structural Adjustment Programme; socio-cultural perspectives; narratives, disadvantaged students; poor socio-economic conditions, Zimbabwe

## GLOSSARY

BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CCMT	Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation
CCWM	Community Cultural Wealth Model
CDC	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
DEO	District Education Office
ECD	Early Childhood and Development
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EO	Education Officer
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FMSI	Marist International Solidarity Foundation
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	gross domestic product
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HRO	Human Resources Officer
IATT	Inter-Agency Task Team
ICT	Internet Computer Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NAC	National Aids Council
NYSUT	New York State United Teachers
SDA	School Development Association
SDC	School Development Committee
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

ZGCE A	Zimbabwe General Certificate in Education A-Level
ZGCE O	Zimbabwe General Certificate in Education Ordinary Level
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe School Examinations Council
ZJC	Zimbabwe Junior Certificate

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM, PROBLEM FORMULATION, AIMS AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

At-riskiness is defined as a condition in which students are likely to experience adverse educational outcomes, such as low academic achievement, poor school attendance, grade retention and dropout as a result of various individual and social factors. It connotes a permanent psycho-educational condition (Edwards, Danridge & Pleasants, 2014). Aronson (2001) suggests that at-riskiness can be a result of disadvantaged family circumstances, such as rural poverty, lack of education of parents, living in a ghetto, in the care of mothers only, HIV/AIDS affected families, poor socio-economic circumstances, those with imprisoned fathers, living without parents or siblings, immigrant children, the orphaned, the adopted, the institutionalized, child prisoners, the physically and psychologically abused, the racially segregated and ethnic minority children (Valencia, 2011). Spicker (2014) calls these the home-based factors of at-riskiness and states that they are characterized by material deprivation of toys, books and quiet space for study as well as being in poor health; all of which create a non-educationally stimulating environment in the home. At-risk students are deemed to have the potential of dropping out of school due to their perceived overwhelming disinterest in education and their inclination towards certain failure, together with the lack of an apparent capacity to cope with educationally discouraging unique circumstances (Fairbrother, 2008). However, the often unique circumstances of at-risk students are not always clearly understood by educators and policymakers. Thus, the at-risk are often judged harshly as either the deserving culprits who have contributed to their own circumstances or viewed sympathetically as victims of their poverty-stricken circumstances (Lemmer, 2009).

Ormrod (2010) depicts at-risk students in terms of universally confirmed socio-economic attributes, such as belonging to a poor family or being cared for by a single parent, usually the mother. This, and many other circumstances, places students at a higher risk of dropping out before graduation unless special support is provided (Porton, 2014). Brown and Beckett (2013) argue that at-risk students can succeed under remedial alternative educational circumstances. Education Insights (2006) recommends that, rather than viewing the at-risk students as lacking

in interest, it must be appreciated that both at-risk students and their parents are actually more concerned and dissatisfied about a whole range of academic issues, including low standards, high dropout rates and a shortage of resources. Where at-risk students are seen as merely disinterested is probably due to the bigger problem of low expectations or a deficit mentality by teachers (Brown & Beckett, 2013). In this regard, Brown and Beckett (2013) define the at-risk students as those students who fail frequently or have committed a serious infraction of school rules: weapon possession, alcohol or drug usage, persistent disruptive behaviour or truancy. Brown & Beckett (2013) further confirm that disruptive behaviour and disproportionate student discipline is rife among students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In the context of the United States (US), black students, and particularly males, are more likely to be suspended, reported to the school office or receive corporal punishment. Even the community and the students' parents believe that their children are problematic. This possibly causes the collective self-fulfilling belief where the students are incapable of abiding by the schools' social codes of behaviour on loitering, excessive noise, disrespect and threats, which causes at-risk students to be either a grade behind or participate more in the 'hip-hop' culture in search of acceptance and identity outside school, subsequently dropping out as part of their norm of minimum effort (Ogbu, 2003).

It is also possible to argue that, in a sense, at-riskiness can be created by the failure of those in power and privilege to bridge the gap between the actual needs of those who feel disadvantaged by society's expectations of success. Educational access in a fair way is a matter of choice by those in authority. They can choose to spend money on either their private lives or on the good of the community (Aronson, 2001). Aronson (2001) suggests that matters of educational access should not be made private. Educational access is of community priority concern where those with money or power should ensure that those without are enabled access so that the weak, those in situations or positions of neglect and underdevelopment but who need to be emancipated, could then be able to move to higher levels of social and material well-being (Ibhawoh & Dibua, 2003). Thus, the community/society may have a lot to do with generating at-riskiness through created disadvantages for some families and their children.

Vang (2010) concurs that at-risk students can be supported by teachers who need to be motivated by a desire to practise classroom research for change. Spicker (2014) stresses that at-riskiness includes school factors which cause disadvantage through authorities' failure to respond to student needs. However, teachers in deprived areas may not be in a position to do

so when incapacitated by lack of school resources, a limited curriculum and low teacher expectations, reinforced by streaming, the restrictive examination system and high teacher turnover. Both Spicker (2014) and Vang (2010) suggest that good school initiatives and application of pedagogical research initiatives may neutralize the impact of disadvantage and at-riskiness. It is possible therefore for the at-risk students to succeed academically under flexible teachers who accept the diversity of individual student learning styles. To be at-risk therefore, according to Vang (2010), means to be in a situation where both teachers and the school fail to coach students for success. Unsupported students feel or experience being trapped in cycles of failure, leading them to develop strong negative feelings about themselves and their schools.

Ormrod (2010) also confirms the likelihood or potential of a higher risk for some students and not others on assumptions that single out the at-risk students as those whose chances of sustained school attendance are constantly challenged by a particular situation or combinations of circumstances that cause the possibility of failure or other frustrations with school attendance. Ormrod (2010) lists the following as at-risk student characteristics: a history of academic failure; older age in comparison with classmates; emotional and behavioural problems; frequent interaction with low-achieving peers; lack of psychological attachment to school; and increasing disinvolvement with school. Jones (2006) concurs with Ormrod (2010) on the above and extends the list to include: low socio-economic status; students to whom the English language is not their first language; moving home frequently; poor reading skills; grade retention of one or more years; multiple suspensions and expulsions; home alone more than three hours a day; pregnancy; drug use; and boredom with school. Moore, Vandivere and Redd (2006) suggest that the characteristics of at-risk children should be analysed from three perspectives: i) parental characteristics: children are at-risk if the family is poor, has single parenthood or low parental education levels; ii) neighbourhood characteristics: the child's community, neighbourhood or school, which could be crime riddled or has ubiquitous low high school pass rates; and iii) the cognitive characteristics. Moore, Vandivere and Redd (2006) also suggest that children are at-risk if they are intellectually disabled (evident as an IQ of 70 and below), as well as challenges in adaptive behaviour to function normally in everyday life in the following situations: conceptual skills like reading and writing; social skills like responsibility and self-esteem; and practical skills like the ability to eat, use the bathroom and dress themselves (Rocha, 2014). Capuzzi and Gross (2008) also summarize the characteristics of at-risk students as being: the discouraged; poverty prone; lacking in educational support and

therefore prone to withdrawal; tardiness; truancy; failure; frequent absence; and increased dropout. Vang (2010) posits that the school system and cultural and linguistic backgrounds put them at a disadvantage and learning becomes difficult. He further states that at-risk factors for academic difficulties confirm that the at-risk students are usually poor, of ethnic minority status and of poor economic status. Thus, at-risk students may lack public confidence due to cognitive challenges, some disability or a poor family background lacking in adequate support resources for continued school attendance. This can be exacerbated by a school which also does not have a particularly nurturing reputation.

### **1.1.1 At-riskiness in Zimbabwe**

At-riskiness has become a challenge for sections of Zimbabwe's school population since the early 1990s, as highlighted by both the popular press and academic literature. A prominent line of debate suggests that since the adoption and subsequent failure of EASP (Mzumara, 2012), sections of the population have increasingly been disadvantaged by poverty and concomitant poor social conditions, which include unemployment, poor health, single-parent households and child neglect. Under the ESAP, government funding was cut (Mwalubunju & Otitodun, 2011) and the financial responsibility for education was transferred to communities, thus increasing at-riskiness and exposure to educational disadvantage (Vang, 2010). Parents who must shoulder the payment of school fees are also victims of a shrinking economy, massive retrenchments, unemployment and hyperinflationary pressures. As a result of the deterioration of the socio-economic environment, the increase in poverty and poor social conditions, a disadvantaged school environment has developed in Zimbabwe (Hove, Ngwerume & Muchemwa, 2013). This has led to increased educational disadvantage and at-riskiness, which is evident in higher failure and school dropout rates (Chinyoka, 2014; Kurebwa & Mabhandu, 2015). Education has become dependent on the ability-to-pay basis, and government has reclassified education into a class-based commodity. From their position of financial advantage, wealthier parents can provide educational access characterized by quality resources, which assures a secure future for their children. In contrast, the poor's children are exposed more and more to poor quality education with limited resources. In a study on a deterioration in the loss of educational access, Boler and Carroll (2004) examined elements of Zimbabwean student disadvantage, such as socio-economic status, in tandem with factors of educational indicators. Boler and Carroll (2004) concluded that family socio-economic status affected the ability to pay fees, and hunger and related home anxieties caused poor concentration among

poor students, which also influenced their enrolment. This situation is exacerbated for girl students. In summary, disadvantaged students in Zimbabwe cannot cope with educationally discouraging circumstances and are at-risk of failure and dropout.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Against the background given above, the main research question was formulated as follows:

What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe?

This problem can be subdivided into the following sub problems:

- How are at-riskiness and at-risk students defined in the literature? What are the needs and characteristics of at-risk students? How is the behaviour of at-risk students explained by different theoretical perspectives? What are the characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness?
- How does at-riskiness appear in the Zimbabwean education system? What contextual factors contribute to the incidence of at-risk students with particular reference to secondary schools?
- What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe?
- Based on the findings of the literature review and empirical inquiry, what recommendations can be made for the reduction of at-riskiness among secondary school students in Zimbabwe?

## **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

In the light of the main research question, the principal aim of the study was to investigate the experience of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe.

This aim was subdivided into the following objectives:

- To define the concept of at-riskiness and to identify the needs and characteristics of at-risk students; to discuss how the behaviour of at-risk students is explained according to different theoretical perspectives; and to identify and describe the characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness (Chapter Two).
- To document how at-riskiness appears in the Zimbabwean education system and to describe the contextual factors which contribute to the incidence of at-risk students with particular reference to secondary schools (Chapter Three).
- To explore the experiences of a selected group of at-risk students in the Zimbabwean District of Chitungwiza (Chapters Four and Five).
- Based on the findings of the literature review and qualitative inquiry, to make recommendations for the reduction of at-riskiness among secondary school students in Zimbabwe (Chapter Six).

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In line with the preliminary review of the existing body of literature on this topic, the relationship between disadvantages and at-riskiness in secondary school creates a vicious circle. On one hand, the characteristics of individuals can make them prone to at-riskiness. This potentially catalyses the riskiness when combined with the poor socio-economic conditions persisting in the country by increasing the chances for repeated absenteeism and possible subsequent dropping out from educational opportunities. The educational experience of the student is therefore degraded.

On the other hand, however, the lack of opportunities for education in Zimbabwe has long-term impacts on both individuals and at societal level. This issue is therefore of crucial importance for the future prospects and developmental potential of the country.

The present argument represents one of the first attempts to provide a comprehensive assessment of the causes and consequences of the current state of at-riskiness and education in Zimbabwe. A number of key contributions can therefore be associated with this study. To begin with, this study is expected to provide the necessary guidance for policymakers and Zimbabwean society in order to suggest the need to address the current problem and promote sustainable educational access in the country. Secondly, the wider contribution of this study can be recognized by promoting further research in other national contexts. The third and final

contribution of this study is expected to affect the academic debate on at-riskiness in the hope of supporting children who are at-risk of sustained school attendance. While the majority of the studies on the educational disadvantage of at-risk students have been conducted within the US context, this study will enhance the current level of understanding of the studied phenomenon in different cultural and political contexts, thus informing academic debate within sub-Saharan Africa.

## **1.5 METHOD**

The research problem was investigated by means of a literature review followed by a qualitative research inquiry using a narrative approach. Only a synopsis of the qualitative inquiry is presented in this section. The full detail is presented in Chapter Four of this study.

### **1.5.1 Literature Review**

According to Boote and Beile (2005), a literature study in research is an evaluative report on selected studies found in the literature related to the topic, in this case, at-riskiness of secondary school students with particular reference to Zimbabwe. This literature study was descriptive, summative, evaluative and clarificative on the subject of at-riskiness.

The literature study enlightened what was readily known, as explained by Bryman (2004), who states that a literature study offers different theoretical and methodological approaches on what has been done already. Thus, the literature study assisted in the exploration of the needs and characteristics of at-risk students and also examined the context of at-riskiness in the education system of Zimbabwe. The sources consulted included books, policy documents and legislation, newspaper and magazine articles, journal articles and internet publications. The literature study provided an analytical framework (Bryman 2004) to inform the empirical inquiry. Thus, the literature study refined, assisted and even refocused the topic (Boote & Beile, 2005).

### **1.5.2 Research Design**

This research consisted of a narrative qualitative case study inquiry which, according to Reissman and Speedy (2007: 429), is within the realist, postmodernist and constructionist tradition. The case study is appraised by Miller (2010) for its strength of depth in focus, analysis

and explicit purpose suitable here in linking the high school students as an entity within the contextual interrelationships of possible disadvantage in what appeared to be the effects of government withdrawal of subsidies compounded by a deteriorating economy and education with unique effects on capacity to sustain access and quality education for Chitungwizan students.

The narrative inquiry is defined as an approach of inquiry which examines the storied nature of human recounting of lives and events (Roberts, 2002). The narrative inquiry is therefore based on people's past, present and future, which relates to the subjects' place within the events, the stories they generate and their role in the unfolding events. It is appraised as a powerful research tool to understand the epiphanic moments, crisis or significant events in one's life, according to Lemmer (2009: 85). Using a socio-educational approach (which concerns itself with not only an individual's intelligence but aptitude, situational contexts, and learning outcomes) (Taie & Afshari 2015), the narrative inquiry employed life stories to gather experiences on the phenomenon of at-riskiness. As such, the narrative inquiry was further suitable due to its three distinct characteristics: temporality, sociality and place, which refer to the continuous revision attached to experiences; personal/social conditions; and geographical boundaries of events.

### **1.5.3 Location of the Study**

Chitungwiza, in Harare Metropolitan Province, is an all-black, working-class dormitory town 25 kilometres south of Harare. It was selected as a suitable location for the study due to its typicality for at-riskiness. Harare Metropolitan Province has 33 secondary schools, with 7 secondary schools located in Chitungwiza which cater for 8,400 students. Declining industrial activity and the economic meltdown experienced in Zimbabwe as a whole has made life difficult for Chitungwizan residents. It is a low-income, high-density dormitory urban centre, with rising numbers of impoverished people (Kamete, 2002). Chitungwiza has very limited socio-economic activity among its 356,840 residents. The majority of these residents commute to Harare for work, and the remainder work informally within the neighbourhood or within Chitungwiza's very few industries (Government of Zimbabwe 2012). Chitungwizan schools are therefore assumed to represent a typical community of at-riskiness for secondary school students.

#### **1.5.4 Selection of Participants**

Chitungwiza has 7 secondary schools with 8,400 students. I used Ministry of Education data relating to the characteristics of educational at-riskiness for the selection of two secondary schools: that is, highest absenteeism rates and worst performance in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) rankings. The headmaster of each school (School A and School B) identified three male participants and three female participants based on school records of class repetition, absenteeism and school punishment logs. These students were deemed to be information-rich participants.

#### **1.5.5 Data Gathering**

The fieldwork for this study was conducted within a period of seven months during 2016, making this a time- and geographically-limited study for the year 2016 Form 4 cohort. A gatekeeper was recruited from the teachers to facilitate issues of identity, confidence, efficiency and a trusting relationship between the participants and myself. I was the principal data gatherer. Data gathering was carried out by obtaining narratives from the participants about their experience of at-riskiness. These were autobiographical representations, which are appraised as being free and rich self-narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

The data gathering process started with an introductory meeting with the participants at each school. This session was followed by the twelve participant personal life history interviews. I asked the participants to view their lives as resembling chapters of a book, according to the adopted schedule of Veitch (2014) and McAdams' (1995) life history model (see Appendix G), and to write their life stories accordingly. Each chapter in the life story represented a significant educational life event(s). After reading these narratives, I followed up with an interview in order to obtain a fuller picture on each participant's version of at-riskiness. If there were issues identified as requiring probing, I obtained further rich data through an unstructured interview with each participant. The interviews were held at a time and venue convenient to each participant within the school, and were recorded on a digital recorder.

### **1.5.6 Data Analysis**

The written narratives and transcriptions of the interviews comprised the raw data. I adopted the inductive narrative data analysis approach to enable me to conceptualize the social patterns and structures of at-riskiness from that data because of this strategy's ability to enable constant comparison between the first narrative and subsequent narratives. Through constant content analysis, I searched for literature review related themes. The latter enabled comparison of the findings to what is known already about at-riskiness. The third strategy I used was to search for themes that are embedded in instrument questions and in the research questions. I then put this into a data comparison matrix for ease of comparison, first between the participants and second between the themes for ease of a final summary.

### **1.5.7 Reliability of Data**

The condition of the context of this research did not assume to represent students from similar backgrounds of at-riskiness. This was a time- and location-specific study. The same was not obviously true for a different class or a different school and community, and this study relied on the participants' narratives of events, which I accepted as the truth. Thus, the validity and reliability of this research was therefore considered to be fairly limited to the population, sample and method design. This was consistent with Beeck (2014), who argues that findings from such research cannot be generalized because it is possible to gather different personal experiences and opinions from a different set of participating children. He further argues that where the research also has only one researcher tasked with observing, interpreting and editing, as is the case here, researcher descriptions are unavoidably coloured by the personal perceptions of that researcher. Objectivity is only possible when researchers approach the object(s) of their research with impartiality and with dispassion so as to avoid contaminating their research and thus minimize, if not completely eliminate, bias because of personal history or interest. I was accordingly advised by Beeck (2014) and Mills' (2010) work to avoid this possible researcher bias contamination of the evidence by incorporating participant feedback on the findings before the final copy. This presented the opportunity for review and adjustment towards a final version of the findings after integrating a unanimous position on the remarks of all the participants whose validity was established through low-inference descriptors like quotations to allow the participants to speak for themselves.

### **1.5.8 Ethical Considerations**

I complied with the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education and the University of South Africa (UNISA) code of ethical conduct to fulfil all the expected ethical requirements pertinent to this research. I did this by obtaining ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee, College of Education, UNISA, and written permission from the Ministry of Education (see Appendices B). The latter referred me to the Harare Provincial Metropolitan Director from where I was cleared for the the District Education Officer (DEO) of Chitungwiza, (see appendice C) who stamped and signed my provincial clearance letter to allow me to meet with the headmaster of each school. The headmasters and parents signed letters of consent before the participants signed their letters of assent (see Appendices D, E, F).

### **1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

The following terms have been identified as important to the understanding of the study. They are described briefly here as more in-depth descriptions of the concepts were given in subsequent chapters.

*At-risk students:* These are students who are discouraged, poverty prone and lacking in educational support, and are therefore prone to withdrawal, tardiness, truancy, failure, frequent absence and increased dropout (Capuzzi & Gross, 2008).

*Dropouts:* Are those students who enrol into school but fail to complete, or progress beyond, a given level within the school system (Piromruen & Keoyote, 2001; UNESCO, 2003). Additional emphasis is placed on the transitional phase of repeated absenteeism, which tends to eventually lead to full withdrawal/dropping out. It was assumed that sometimes students did not simply drop out of school but did so as a result of pressures relating to their desire for regular attendance.

*At-riskiness:* Is a label for students who are likely to experience adverse educational outcomes, such as low academic achievement, poor school attendance, grade retention and dropping out. It connotes a permanent psycho-educational condition (Edwards, et al, 2014).

*Narrative inquiry*: Is a group of approaches that rely on the written or spoken word or visual representation of individuals, emphasizing the lives of individuals as told through stories Lichtman (2013).

## **1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter One: This chapter serves to briefly orientate the reader to the need for the study, the relevant research to support the study and an overview of the research problem, problem formulation, aims and research design.

Chapter Two: This chapter involves a study of the theoretical frameworks which inform at-riskiness. It discusses the needs and characteristics of at-risk students, how the behaviour of at-risk students is explained by different theoretical perspectives and the characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness.

Chapter Three: This chapter discusses the Zimbabwean schooling system with special reference to contextual factors which contribute to at-riskiness within secondary schools.

Chapter Four: In this chapter, the methodology used is presented, together with the qualitative research design with special reference to narrative inquiry.

Chapter Five: This chapter presents the findings of the experiences of a selected group of at-risk students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe obtained by using a narrative inquiry.

Chapter Six: This chapter culminates in a summary of the findings and recommendations for improvement of practice, and provides suggested areas for further research.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have introduced my interest in educational at-riskiness and the rationale for launching this study. I used the Zimbabwean background to this study for its relevance to the contextual definition of at-riskiness in general. I then used that to highlight my perception of the Zimbabwean concerns of at-riskiness to ensure that I pitch my initial orientation for this study appropriately. This was followed by presenting highlights of the literature review and I

then briefly touched on aspects of methodology. I specifically mentioned the research design, including the location, sampling, data gathering, analysis, trustworthiness of data and clarification of key terms, before closing with the structure outline of the thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF AT-RISKINESS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the evidence of at-riskiness as reviewed from current literature relating to socio-cultural theoretical perspectives, summarizes key concepts on the characteristics of students at-risk and closes with an overview of the school-based programmes aiming to reduce at-riskiness. Specific literature on at-riskiness from Zimbabwe in particular and the developing world in general on the socio-educational theme of the condition of at-riskiness in secondary schools was not readily available at the time I needed it, and this persuaded me to borrow from research and debates abundant in Western World literature, particularly from the US. American literature on at-riskiness traces the concept to April 1983, when US schools appeared to have lost concern for the right of the poor's educational access (Edweek, 2014). This created the motivation to launch this study over the Zimbabwean-observed government position after 1990. Since there has been extensive research carried out in the US on this concept, I focused on contextualizing similarities and the applicability of the principles of at-riskiness in more than one Third World country due to the availability of interesting research findings from mostly sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia, India and Yemen.

These countries appear to have socio-economic environments that emphasize the burden of at-riskiness among high school children so that, unless redressed, the children remain excluded from fully participating in the nation's educational system. The conditions creating at-riskiness for students in the developed world and for those students from the developing world may be similar relative to the nation's per capita income. In this literature, I was interested in how at-riskiness presents itself in the Third World where at-riskiness appears to take an economic, social and psychological character that can influence the nature of the school culture.

This literature study assumed the applicability of the same principles used in contextualizing at-riskiness within the First World to support the effort of correcting educational disadvantages within a developing country, particularly Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's changes in economic policies appear to have caused unprecedented educational access challenges, as explained by analysis based on some of the assumptions of the cultural and social capital theories.

## **2.2 THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF AT-RISKINESS IN ZIMBABWE**

### **2.2.1 Cultural Capital and At-riskiness**

Cultural capital by definition includes ideas and knowledge used by individuals to fully function in life, according to [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org) (Sa), and this includes education. However, an efficient education for the quality transmission of cultural capital may be hampered by chronic under-financing, the quality of education and decentralization (Agabrian, 2007).

Cultural capital includes favourable resources such as enabling legislation, societal rules, language and means of effective communication to promote the likelihood of success and moving up the social ladder. The at-risk students do not have the same levels of cultural capital advantages as those from the privileged groups in society. This explains why there is evidence of unequal scholastic achievement under which at-risk children fail to benefit from school attendance. They either drop out or fail because governments sometimes do not provide the means to control the effect of the cultural deficiencies suffered by the disadvantaged students in accessing education.

Educational success represents the specific profit which children from the different social classes can obtain from the educational market. The outcome of an educational activity represents the profits to the educational investors, which in Zimbabwe is the government that controls secondary school education and regulates private education. It is up to the investors to maintain enough investment, and that guarantees educational success for all taking the same level examination. However, the differential possession of cultural capital varies with social class, but allowing the education system to assume equal possession of cultural capital (Sullivan, 2002) can only suggest a deliberate lack of interest in providing equity. The rate of success/failure/potential to drop out (profit) depends on the amount of the investors' available educational investment. It follows therefore that failure or dropping out of school is not natural. This results from the lack of adequate investment in cultural capital in all its forms. This is illustrated by the fact that the government of Zimbabwe invests differently between government and non-government school education. The relation of this investment to profits is confirmed in the perception among Zimbabweans that Group C schools generally do worse in public examinations compared to Group A schools that are often associated with good standards of

education and consistently high pass rates. These school groupings roughly correspond to Zimbabwean social classes in which Group A schools are situated among the affluent suburbs of the wealthy, including the ruling class, while Group C schools are generally for the poor and therefore represent higher levels of income segregation and less economic mobility, respectively (Sharkey, 2013). This further confirms that different proportions of resources into education usually reflect different social class allocations, and means that this government invests less capital for the profit of lower classes (www.marxists.org [Sa]).

This reduced investment in education to profit lower classes less explains the systematic differential chances of profit between social classes, with the lower classes benefiting less, as evident from higher dropout rates and higher rates of failure. www.marxists.org (Sa) suggests that the reason why the ruling classes invest less in the education of the poor is to ensure that with less educational profit (success) education reproduces the original positions of underdogs for lower classes. The elite's interest is in securing lack of mobility for the poor classes and as such, continued reproduction of failure will not need corrective educational investment from the government. Unless the family is in a position to invest enough on its own, the child and subsequent offspring are caught in a vicious circle of reproduced poverty and disadvantage. This is because cultural capital previously invested by the family or as supported by government (www.marxists.org [Sa]) determines the extent to which students can benefit from education. Some families in impoverished neighbourhoods have very little social capital for inheritance towards meaningful student educational success unless the state injects meaningful state support. Lack of government support for the poor condones disadvantage for lower classes while also promoting the educational interests of upper classes, who, by the same token, will continue to enjoy their privileged positions of advantage over the underdogs (www.marxists.org [Sa]).

### **2.2.2 Social Capital**

At another level, educational at-riskiness and disadvantage are seen as emanating from inadequate cultural capital and social capital. This can be cultural in the sense of a lack of invested interest in education but also social, where it is defined as doing things for one another and in the trust that people want to develop one another (Catts & Ozga, 2005). During the period between 1990 and 2016, Zimbabwe appeared divided between two major political ideologies. On the one hand was the ruling elite, among whom could be identified some of the

richest individuals in the country, if not the world. On the other hand were the struggling masses generally associated with unemployment and the opposition politics in Zimbabwe. Unemployment is not a positive factor for social capital. In fact, unemployment is related to crime among poor communities. The only common factor between the two groups was suspicion, which appeared to have destroyed any trust and development of potential bonding of inter-linked communities. Favouritism appeared to be enjoyed alongside politics of allegiance, in which those who did not belong were consistently excluded from any opportunities and structures of support (Catts & Ozga, 2005). One example of this was the purging of civil servants associated with a fired vice president. All officers under the fired vice president were threatened with dismissal (Mushava, 2015; Thornycroft, 2014). Further evidence is the denial of food handouts to non-Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) citizens, as reported by Shoko (2013).

The above appeared to be the established nature of Zimbabwean politics since the late 1990s and it was difficult to establish the progressive definition of social capital when it referred to trust networks that individuals could draw upon for social support, just like financial capital could be drawn upon for investment (Grenfell, 2009). In current Zimbabwean politics then, social capital was not beneficial for the support of disadvantaged communities. It appeared to have been consistent with the observation that the elite could choose not to invest in social capital so as to propagate a system of class reproduction (Becker, 1964: 63–66) easily recognizable as educational class inequalities where the poor's children remained at risk of poor educational quality and dropping out or failure. Social capital as a resource could be misused to promote inequalities in educational access in disadvantaged communities like the suburb of Chitungwiza. Such communities therefore remained unable to mobilize enough social capital among themselves, as would be expected under decentralization. Poor communities have nothing to invest and neither do they have potential resources for networking into group membership, for all they have to offer their neighbours is nothingness.

### **2.3 SOCIAL-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON AT-RISKINESS**

Zimbabwe government expenditure on education had been declining since the beginning of the 1990s with allocation of the national budget dropping from 22 per cent to as low as 14 per cent (Pollock, 2010). These budgets are the means by which the at-risk's social, economic and cultural conditions should be made better by the state. Learning cannot be divorced from the

social, economic and cultural conditions in a country, as Bourdieu (1977) posits. One way of reproducing inequality is to ignore the fact that children do not approach education from a similar starting point, since, by accident of birth, children have differential access to a range of economic, social and cultural capital. As a result, young people, especially those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, usually have a poorer learning experience or a greater risk of failure or dropping out than their privileged counterparts. The Zimbabwean government's withdrawal of funding or the symbolic 'closure' of educational access is probably best explained by socio-cultural theories in order to gain an insight into the needs and characteristics of at-risk students. According to Vygotsky (1979), an individual's learning is influenced by him/herself in addition to the social processes and cultural symbols like social class within a broader cultural and historical setting such as can be attributable to declining educational state budgets.

This therefore suggests an analysis of the effect of social class on at-riskiness and further looking at how one's educational disadvantage could be seen within the context of declining state budgets on some social classes. This is further explained by Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which has been used to explain that the at-risk and disadvantaged lack adequate capital to compete fairly in public examinations (Tzanakis, 2011). However, this theory is criticized by Oliver and Shapiro (1995), who instead propose the Community Cultural Wealth Model (CCWM), which analyses at-riskiness from the point that poor neighbourhoods burden students with family responsibilities, hostile school climates and unwelcoming environments (Clements, 2000) for sustained successful educational access and experience. Therefore, students' deficits should be seen within the broader context closely related to Zimbabwean economic policies since 1990, which continue to create poor neighbourhoods and deny students social capital.

Oliver and Shapiro (1995) justify the proposed CCWM on the premise that critical theorists like Bourdieu have not moved far enough in community capital analysis. However, they praise Bourdieu's socio-cultural capital theory as being useful in contrasting the reproduction of the wealth's values over the culturally disadvantaged through schools, curricula and examinations which protect middle class values against the poor and minorities (Sullivan, 2002). Disadvantaged students' experiences and perspectives are therefore best analysed by the CCWM (Yosso, 2006), which defines capital in terms of those life aspects that students require for full educational development. The model expands social and cultural capital into six forms

of capital, which Yosso (2006: 78) identifies as: aspirational capital; linguistic capital; familial capital; social capital; navigational capital; and resistant capital.

The ESAP in Zimbabwe appears to have created challenges that destroyed capital, probably in all its forms, and it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms (Bourdieu, 1979). Probably through ESAP, at-risk Zimbabwean students bear the negative impact of relations of exchange, such as social, cultural and symbolic relations that propagate unequal distribution of resources, differential power relations and poverty (Bourdieu, 1979). If that is the case, educational access was reduced to the fate of pure economism under the economic globalization of ESAP (Moran, 2003). For the rich, ESAP continued to multiply their monetary fortunes and also appeared to protect and insulate their educational fortunes. ESAP also appeared to have depoliticized the social, cultural practices and institutions of the bourgeoisie by locating them outside the organizing logic of Zimbabwean society, as if they were incidental to, rather than complicit in, the creation of educational at-riskiness and disadvantage (Ibid.). This is an enabling myth of the dominant classes, who appear to continue enjoying a better education (Ibid.).

Further evidence accumulates as one questions the possible reasons behind the poor's education, which, on the surface appeared to have consistently suffered since 1990 without a possible deliberate cause. Moran's (2003) observation explains this: i) the distribution of cultural, social and symbolic capital was as important a determinant of social, economic and cultural well-being and power as was the distribution of economic capital; and ii) that its acquisition was far from a neutral, disinterested enterprise, but one which legitimized the enormous power, superior social position and material wealth of the dominant class.

ESAP-founded policies appeared to favour increasing user-demanded private colleges and schools; a trend glorified under ESAP's successes of individualism and freedom of choice (Ibid.). This capital-based, two-tier educational system re-split education into the historical discriminatory Group A, Group B and Group C schools consistent with the observation that wealth preserves exclusive educational access by students from richer families to Group A schools. The policy creating Group A schools could be criticized for the so-called 'school choice', especially within urban education systems, which, for the elite, appeared like a new form of social closure, permitting access to new social positions and limiting competition from members of the working classes (Ball, 2003; Dronkers, Felouzis & Zanten, 2010). This

exclusive access epitomizes the undesirable significant societal inequalities engendered and further reinforced by the spread of marketization, privatization and selectionism of ESAP (Moran, 2003).

The economic inequalities appeared to be propagated and worsened by the government's adoption of the neo-liberal strategy (Ibid.) codenamed ESAP, which commercialized education and turned mere poverty into complex educational disadvantages for Group B and C schools. Those who were better positioned socially had political power and economic capital and were accountable for societal inequalities and uneven distribution of cultural and symbolic capital (Ibid.). Bourdieu (1977) argues that the uneven distribution of education as cultural capital naturalized the uneven distribution of economic capital by making it appear as though the right to a better school was determined by the ability to pay (Moran, 2003). Paying under disadvantage ensures and masks the continued reproduction of economic capital inequality (Ibid.). Education provision without the state equalizing subsidies created uneven distribution of capital. As a result, Group B and C schools appear to be under-resourced and uninspiring, have high teacher turnover, high student dropout rates, and often have poor public examination grades; all because of capital.

The unequal distribution of capital actively contributed to and heightened the inequality of conditions and outcomes which structured Zimbabwean society (Ibid.). The education system had been used as the central apparatus for the reproduction of inequality, both in its official set-up and curriculum, which gave rise to an unequal allocation of credentialed cultural capital and, in its hidden curriculum, which validated and rewarded the ways of being of and knowing the dominant culture (Ibid.). The strongly individualist ethos of right-wing education systems could only exaggerate this tendency, for individual success would be presumed to result solely from intelligence and hard work, with no place given to the differential institutionalized patterning of cultural capital (Ibid.). This probably explained the prejudiced conclusion that children of the poor lacked interest in education. The economy and agency of education lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences and hierarchies, to a sense of one's place and to behaviours of self-exclusion, such as school dropouts (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This was probably why a few strategies for reducing at-riskiness were evident in Zimbabwean secondary schools. Educational at-riskiness and disadvantage were, to an extent, characterized by the nature of neighbourhoods which were, in a socio-economic sense, evidence of the successes or failures of socio-economic policies in the way in which students used their

abilities, skills, knowledge and contacts within their communities for survival and to resist distraction (Yosso, 2005).

Secondary school years are critical in the life course of a student, and it is significant to note that they coincide with one's adolescence. Crowder and South (2003) state that the adolescent years are important in determining subsequent social and economic opportunities, which should be secured by avoiding dropping out of secondary school. However, they further explain that adolescents drop out of secondary school due to the effects of the disadvantages embedded in the socio-economic distress experienced. In their argument, they suggest that adolescents suffer urban social dislocation for which educational dropout is only one of the many effects of neighbourhood socio-economic distress, impairing aspirational, navigational and resistant capital. This argument is based on the assumption that adolescents participate in behaviour best explained by theories of collective socialization, social capital and social control (Crowder & South, 2003). The authors also point out that the situation for adolescents under socio-economic distress in the US was worse among African-Americans; probably due to increasing geographic concentration of urban poverty. They add that socio-economic distress was also more evident through failure to complete high school by black adolescents from single-parent households and among white adolescents from low-income families. In addition, Crowder and South (2003) confirm the probable damaging exposure to neighbourhood poverty/social and economic marginalization, as can be seen in the needs and characteristics listed below.

## **2.4 SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF AT-RISKINESS AND THE DISADVANTAGED HOUSEHOLD**

### **2.4.1 Legal and Bureaucratic Disadvantages**

Zimbabwean educational access policies require students to have a birth certificate for enrolment, and a lack of one creates difficulties in registration for public examinations. However, in Zimbabwe, only 35 per cent of the poorest children, compared to 75 per cent of the richest, have birth certificates (UNICEF, 2013). Orphans and vulnerable children are disadvantaged by lack of formal identity registration (Global Giving Foundation, 2014). This barrier prevents these children from exercising many of their basic human rights such as enrolling in school and sitting formal examinations (Global Giving Foundation, 2014). This disadvantage is also confirmed by Muronda, (2009) when he adds that orphans are

disadvantaged because, while the school demands birth certificates, the condition for obtaining one is that the orphan needs three witnesses to accompany him/her to register. Transporting three adults to the registrar's office to register requires money, which, if not available, causes them to fail sitting public examinations, and they also live as unregistered citizens of the country (Muronda, 2009). These indirect costs are equally burdensome and disadvantageous for poor orphans and poor families (UNICEF, 2013). Without proof of identity, children are disadvantaged, as may be depicted by the difficulty in accessing health and education services, and this places such children at the risk of child labour, sexual abuse and early marriage, concludes IRIN (2004).

In practice, it is not always easy for the Children's Protection and Adoption Act of 1997 to effectively break the conservative cultural barriers that limit orphan adoption to within blood-kin willing families. It is not clear to what extent this presents challenges in adoption involving strangers and from foreign interested parties originating from outside Zimbabwe. The point emphasized here is that the bureaucratic and lengthy processes required for orphan adoption seem to add to the difficulties of child disadvantages. This is more so among the Muslim population, not only in Zimbabwe, who insist on membership of the Islam faith as a prerequisite according to conventional Muslim wisdom, which holds that adoption is alien and prohibited by the dictates of Islam (Johnson, 2012). Although there is a small minority of Muslims in Zimbabwe, they too experience the same bureaucratic gridlocks because not a single Muslim is allowed to adopt a poor homeless child (Nasreen, 2012).

The Guardianship of Minors Act of 1997 and the Deceased Family Maintenance Act of 1997 do not indicate consultation for choice of children nor do they provide for custody of double-orphaned children. This legislation has very little to do with the hundreds of orphaned children in Zimbabwe since they are rarely adoptable outside close family relations. The Deceased Family Maintenance Act of 1997 does not always protect adolescents from greedy property-grabbing relatives, which leaves orphans destitute and unable to access their entitlement to their inheritance and household property (McPherson, 2006). Property and inheritance legal regimes distribute property and other assets in a manner that results in deep economic inequalities, which in turn impact negatively on orphans (Ahmed, 2011).

UNICEF (2004) confirms that there are more than fifty million children worldwide who are not registered and are therefore not counted in statistics or even recognized officially; a fact that

leaves orphans without access to education and health care. These unregistered children then become easily exploitable. In Bangladesh, girls as young as 10 work as domestics, some without pay (*Bangladesh Observer* 2005).

The Zimbabwean Education Act of 1987 declares education as compulsory at primary school level but the state has no enforcement mechanism. In addition, the requirement for birth certificates and the withdrawal of state subsidies into education makes the idea of compulsory education inconsistent. It makes sense to have compulsory education without additional demands, such as birth certificates and uniforms, which make education inaccessible to the disadvantaged (UNICEF, 2004). Alternatively, it should be easier to improve birth certificate procurement policy if not allowing students in without birth certificates still makes sense. A birth certificate is a global identity document. This situation appears to be worse among the HIV/AIDS affected population, some of whom became orphaned before acquiring birth certificates.

#### **2.4.2 At-riskiness and Health Factors**

The UNAIDS Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education (2008: 4) is of the view that HIV/AIDS worsens at-riskiness by causing misery, vulnerability and disadvantages among adolescents, which include:

- having parents who are HIV infected or are suffering from AIDS;
- leading or living in child-headed households;
- living in families that are caring for orphans or other additional family members because of AIDS;
- living in communities severely devastated by HIV/AIDS;
- being orphaned due to AIDS (maternal, paternal or both);
- living with HIV since birth;
- having been newly infected with HIV; and
- being especially vulnerable and at risk of HIV infection due to lack of economic or gendered power in the face of the epidemic.

(Adapted from UNAIDS IATT on Education 2008: 4)

In Namibia and Tanzania, UNESCO confirmed the specific challenges faced by the educational systems in their responses to the disadvantages and the needs of HIV/AIDS-affected learners. The study proposes a set of recommendations and guidelines about how best to support these learners. The challenge is that the countries, comparatively, have stable economies when compared to Zimbabwe. For example, the differences in the gross per capita income for Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were, in the year 2009, 6610.00, 1419.00 and 9 respectively, according to the International Monetary Fund Report (2009). Southern Africa is the most HIV-devastated area; the average annual donor spending per HIV-infected person is USD74, and yet in Zimbabwe the figure is just USD4, according to Bellamy (2005). These differences suggest worse poverty and higher stress levels in Zimbabwe for HIV/AIDS-affected adolescents.

In a South African study of 5,000 households with 29,338 members in the provinces of Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, it was confirmed that nearly one in five children in the study population are orphans (Hutchinson 2007). Poor children and those affected by diseases experienced some psychosocial health stresses both at home and at school from the increasing likelihood of bereavement, poverty and changes in caregivers (Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2008; Rotheram-Borus, Stein & Lin, 2001).

There is also a gender dimension relating to the statistics on HIV infection rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Singh, Karim, Karim, Mlisana, Williamson and Gray (2006) confirm a high prevalence of HIV infection among pregnant women from 26 per cent in 2001 to 34 per cent in 2002 in a South African district. The study also highlighted that 39 per cent of pregnant women in the district were younger than 19 years of age, with the youngest being 12 years of age, and this makes the prevalence a relevant risk to secondary school students. Among the pregnant women younger than 19, HIV prevalence is 25.8 per cent, and the incidence rate is estimated to be as high as 9.6 per cent per annum. Singh et al (2006) state that HIV prevalence among girls younger than 19 attending family planning clinics in this district was 27.5 per cent in 2002, which confirms at-riskiness through exposure to long illnesses, and this affects educational access.

Singh et al (2006) also state that as many as 900,000 children have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS while under the age of 15. This is cause for school dropout as the result of the failure to raise fees, to purchase school uniforms and books, and to pay school levies and examination fees. Belloc, Maruotti and Petrella (2010) conclude that, among other factors,

financial pressure may influence students' withdrawing decisions, and, in urban areas, this results in these children failing to pay their bills for water and electricity and sometimes rent and rates; possibly more so than some of the effects of exposure to prolonged illness.

### **2.4.3 At-riskiness and Exposure to Prolonged Illness**

Parental illness incapacitates the whole family's ability to work, and this has a serious impact on the standards of life in the home. In Malaysia, Ghailan (2010) confirms that HIV-related sickness is among the reasons given by 73 per cent of people who stopped working. Ghailan (2010) explains that HIV has a negative impact on household productivity and income due to cessation of work or the increased number of absences from work as a result of attending clinic, hospital admission or staying home due to illness. This makes those aged 10 and older more vulnerable (Richter, 2004) to the disadvantages of care responsibilities, and the children therefore end up doing more than merely helping.

There are two possible perspectives on how children get involved. First is the necessary routine care which is valuable for the child's own acquisition of vital skills for personal growth. The second category concerns the excesses of burdensome caring responsibilities imposed on a child due to the absence of community or state social support systems. At-riskiness arises from the fact that the latter type of care has elements of time as a crucial consideration (Glendinning, Tjadens, Arksey, Morée, Moran & Nies, 2009). Time spent on caring activities carries the disadvantage of overall opportunity cost, which impacts on educational activity as well as a child's right to mix and play with age mates. The latter are unavoidable burdens for children in this disadvantaged family situation of prolonged family illness.

Prolonged socio-economic depression is known to increase people's vulnerability to stressors, poor health and increased mortality (Murali & Oyebode, 2004). ESAP coincided with the Zimbabwean disadvantage of at-riskiness from the HIV/AIDS pandemic, cholera and typhoid (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] 2011; National AIDS Council [NAC] 2011; World Health Organization [WHO] 2008). Children from the affected families play the caring roles as informal carers (Glendinning et al, 2009), providing a substantial amount of care on a regular basis. This is based initially on pre-existing relationships, such as living together, which worsens the disadvantage of helping someone with a long-term health or support need outside a professional or formal framework (Glendinning et al, 2009).

By 2011, the NAC (2012) estimated that there were 1,151,235 orphaned children in Zimbabwe. The actual child carer figures in Chitungwiza are not known but the practice is encouraged and recognized as a vital indigenous community resource (Skovdal, Magutshwa-Zitha, Campbell, Nyamukapa & Gregson, 2013). However, historically, children's caring roles have long been confirmed in Zimbabwean culture as important in the development of normal childhood. Child caring roles are of concern, according to Skovdal et al, (2013), who argue that children have little choice in the matter and face significant struggles in ways that potentially undermine their well-being. The authors further state that the child carer role has numerous challenges, such as how to provide intimate care for one's parents (toileting, bathing, lifting and carrying), which makes the child very vulnerable. Besides, a household with bedridden parents leaves nobody in charge of generating income or sourcing food, and such needs limit the time left for food gathering, preparation and going to school. Children in these situations also lack adult supervision, which exposes them to the heightened risk of engaging in questionable behaviour such as stealing and prostitution for survival (Skovdal et al, 2013) due to lack of resources for normal livelihoods.

The need for income can lead to families selling land and livestock in order to cover medical expenses (Ahmed, 2011). In turn, the loss of property and livelihoods aggravates poverty and the inability to access care, treatment and support related to the HIV status due to instability and economic disenfranchisement. Ahmed (2011) adds that this further increases the disadvantages relating to school access. Loss of income for the family affected by HIV forms the largest part of the economic costs of HIV, which are approximately six months' worth of the average total household income in Malaysia (Ghailan, 2010).

In his study, Ghailan (2010) establishes that families with sick members do not have enough money for necessities, such as transport, money for healthy food supplements or even traditional medicines. Similar observations are confirmed in South Africa, where many households are unable to plan for adverse and destabilizing events because of lack of assets (Hutchinson, 2007). Unlike in other countries in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe does not have a strong welfare system or grants to cushion the lives of those affected by HIV (Hutchinson, 2007).

According to Smith (2002), HIV/AIDS intensifies the process of social exclusion through its demand for prolonged and intense care, but often ending with the death of the infected. Children

in these families take the responsibility of doing demanding tasks, such as housework, looking after siblings and caring for ill or dying parent(s) (AVERT [Sa]). This is confirmed in a Cardiff study where 40 per cent of the young carers stated that they had provided care and support for more than five years to their families (Noaks & Noaks, 2009). They also cared for their younger siblings, as observed by Rotheram-Borus et al (2001). Being a carer of even younger siblings requires sourcing food and meeting household daily needs. Daily duties involve cooking, intimate care, such as dressing, bathing, feeding, shopping and cleaning, to more impersonal services, such as house cleaning, meal preparation, financial management, transportation and giving emotional support (Barnardos [Sa]; Evans, Catapano, Brooks, Goldstein & Avendano, 2012).

In Lewisham, 82 per cent of child carers provided emotional support and supervision, 68 per cent of young carers provided domestic help in the home, 48 per cent provided general and nursing type care and 18 per cent provided intimate personal care (Maloney, 2010: 8). Noak and Noak (2009) also confirmed that young carers provided general household duties, supervision and cheering up. Care work occupies children for more than 50 hours a week on average among the 13,000 of the estimated 175,000 young carers in the UK aged 12 on average (Barnardos [Sa]). There are regional differences between the UK average weekly hours, and those in Cardiff are less at more than 16 hours a week in caring roles (Noaks & Noaks, 2009). Mothers are also confirmed by 9 per cent of the carers as being the main receivers of care from young carers (Noaks & Noaks, 2009).

These roles have a tremendous impact on the carer's education, possibly through increased demand for shared time due to their increased altruistic responsibilities, which force them to grow up too fast in order to meet the needs of their families (Charles, Stainton & Marshall, 2009). The greatest worry for child carers is having fewer friends as well as missing quality time with them, as confirmed by 91 per cent of the child carers in the Cardiff study (Noaks & Noaks, 2009). These children (82 per cent) also feel overburdened by endless tasks at home without ample rest, and this is among the 77 per cent who feel tiredness in school, according to the study (Noaks & Noaks, 2009).

Child carers confirm being unsettled, anxious and worried in school, and this is reflected in 59 per cent of the sample. Child carers also have problems with school punctuality, time for school activities and time to finish/complete homework, which is confirmed by 77 per cent (Noaks &

Noaks, 2009). A further 52 per cent of the Cardiff study showed that families with child carers find it hard to attend meetings in school, which means that the child carers are less represented in parent-school communication, which is necessary for moulding behaviour through sharing concerns and support.

Runhare and Gordon (2004) also confirm the above in their study of a Zimbabwean school where three quarters of the students are orphans and the majority are in the care of their grandparents, who either do not attend school meetings or, if they attend, have limited views to offer, leaving the burden of responsibility on the school.

HIV/AIDS is associated with a high incidence of poor mental health among orphans (Bhargava, 2005; Forehand, Perkins & Greenwald, 2002). They may also suffer increased levels of anxiety, depression and fear (Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007) as well as societal subtle rejection, if not physical assault or even murder (Skinner & Mfecane, 2004). After the parental death, the children are left on their own as either one-parent orphans or double-parent orphans or sometimes live with grandparents under difficulties of competing tasks for available time.

#### **2.4.4 At-riskiness and Time Poverty**

It seems as if failure to plan carefully further burdens the adolescent with disadvantage through time poverty. Time poverty is created by the competing demands of the household economy with its numerous tasks which challenge time management.

Blackden and Wodon (2006) are of the view that time presents many challenges for the education of the poor, with a high amount of tasks to be done by adolescents at home. This causes challenges in careful planning for adolescents: left with little time for sleep compromises their alertness during the day, causes students greater school week sleep lag and significantly disadvantages them through decreased alertness and increased sleepiness during the day (New York State United Teachers [NYSUT] 1998). I have not been able to obtain literature on the impact of the disadvantage of children's time allocation in Zimbabwe, and all I could find was a very limited attempt in the available literature. Most of the available literature in parts of Africa looks at children in general and not adolescents (Blackden & Wodon, 2006).

One of the factors relating to time disadvantage is the long distances that students travel to school in some parts of Zimbabwe, which is confirmed as a big challenge, according to Kit (2012), who adds that, in some cases in the remote parts of Zimbabwe, children are forced to seek residence near the school to avoid spending more time travelling to school. Spinks (2002) is of the view that this causes students to become despondent, get poor marks or become too tired to participate with enthusiasm actively in school teams because they are having too little sleep if they get home late and have to wake up early for the long journey to school.

Besides long distances, in a Kenyan study, Yamano and Jayne (2004) stated that diseases in the family negatively affect primary school girls' attendance due to the expectation that they share in the burden of caregiving. Family sickness diverts attention from food production, employment, education and care of other household members. In Malawi, studies established that HIV causes time poverty because of the time requirements in caring for the sick and burying the dead, causing a reduction in the time available for other productive activities (Shah, 2001). Poverty is a function of time as well as money (Harvey & Taylor, 2000). HIV creates time shortages through committing children to, among other commitments, sickness, care and funerals, for example, in Zambia, where affected people are said to spend as many as 952 hours a year for personal sickness and even more time for the care of the sick and attending funerals (Cornia & Zagonari, 2002). It is possible for these factors to interplay, reinforce each other and worsen the plight of children: some produce time poverty, others income poverty, and some produce both time and income poverty (Burchardt, 2008).

These activities are allocated along gender lines roughly corresponding to the rights and obligations between males and females in a household, as argued by Blackden and Wodon (2006), who confirm that some gender asymmetry creates different patterns of time use and tasks between men on the one hand and women and children on the other. This is differentiated by gender and the inefficiency and inequality it represents between the sexes (Ibid.). The result is that girls have competing roles simultaneously and are required to balance these competing claims on limited time for each of their roles and still aim to have all tasks done (Ibid.).

In a family set-up, Zimbabwean girls are expected to process food, provide water and firewood, and care for the elderly and the HIV sick (Ibid.). They add that most of these women- and children-gendered tasks consume more time for girls than they do for boys, as is confirmed in Ghana where, of the 6 million hours spent fetching household water, men only spent 2 million

hours, while women (and children) doubled that at 4 million. In comparison, fetching firewood consumes 2.2 million hours of women's time, while men only spend 0.8 million hours (Ibid.). In an HIV era, that burden is made worse because HIV increases the burden of other domestic activities, such as housework, shopping and transportation (Akintola, 2005).

The tasks that come with HIV/AIDS require adolescents to act as heads of households with the burden of time management in order to meet subsistence- and income-generating activities (Serra, 2009). The same adolescents also need time for sleep for memory consolidation, for vital optimal performance in learning tasks, just like the body needs an adequate nutritional status, ambient temperature, a certain level of stress, blood oxygenation, and other variables, which all clearly affect the ability to learn (Spinks, 2002).

It is possible that gender differences compound time poverty against girls because scarcity means difficult choices have to be met. Harsh choices of the use of time are at the core of the interrelationship between the visible market and invisible household economies, given the simultaneous competition, that have to be made, according to Blackden and Wodon (2006). Sometime time usage is indispensable, as argued by Harvey and Taylor (2000) and a certain minimum number of household time overheads may always have to be met for the survival of the family. Such considerations result in Zambian children from many very poor households being kept out of school because of the opportunity cost considerations in favour of boys (Rau, 2002).

Generally, the gender bias in which girls work increasingly longer hours than boys starts at school age 7 to 14 (Tsukada & Silva, 2009), and girls experience less and less time available for homework and self-study, as they have to do more of the unpaid domestic chores. These domestic chores and increased responsibilities of care compromise the girls' capacity to accumulate human capital, possibly leading to the foreclosure of their potential for higher income (Tsukada & Silva, 2009). Evidence of the impact of this bias against girls is illustrated by the overall girl performance in public examinations where, due to the probable shouldering of more responsibilities as Zimbabwean poverty continues to worsen, they in turn performed worse than boys in the national secondary public examinations between 2006 and 2009, as can be seen in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: O-Level National Pass Rate by Gender 2006–2009**

Year	Gender	Total Number of Candidates	Number of Candidates who Passed Five or More Subjects	National Pass Rate
2006	Female	74,363	12,902	17.35
	Male	79,866	18,345	22.97
	<b>Total</b>	<b>154,229</b>	<b>31,247</b>	<b>20.16</b>
2007	Female	85,291	10,354	12.14
	Male	93,983	15,319	16.30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>179,274</b>	<b>25,673</b>	<b>14.32</b>
2008	Female	71,450	8,910	12.47
	Male	71,390	11,722	16.42
	<b>Total</b>	<b>142,840</b>	<b>20,632</b>	<b>14.44</b>
2009	Female	44,209	7,472	16.90
	Male	42,992	9,381	21.82
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87,201</b>	<b>16,853</b>	<b>19.33</b>

(Adapted from Gaidzanwa & Chung, 2008: 3)

Cultural practices are still traceable in the way that girls are treated by some families (Kit (2012), who states that there is in some cultures the belief that girls need less schooling because their place is to stay in the home. This is further confirmed by Hallfors, Cho, Rusakaniko, Iritani, Mapfumo and Halpern (2011), who state that some guardians pressured orphan girls aged 12 to 15 years to marry, which helps the family's savings and protection during old age (Tsukada & Silva, 2009).

Whether married or single, women and very young children spend extended times preparing meals in places where there is no electricity (Blackden & Wodon, 2006) or where its supply is erratic, such as in Chitungwiza and most of Zimbabwe. Women and children in these conditions are short of time to stay in healthier environments, and this overexposure to unhealthy environments causes high levels of acute respiratory infection due to exposure to air pollutants (Green, 2005).

Since most of these tasks are skewed against girl children, it may be concluded that time constraints during girls' productive ages hampers their ability to increase their expected permanent future income (Tsukada & Silva, 2009). This is in the sense that girls' educational benefit is potentially compromised through time shortages and, therefore, poverty impedes individuals' ability to expand their capabilities through education and skills development enough to enhance economic returns in the marketplace (Blackden & Wodon, 2006). Thus, it may be concluded that time and household income poverty affects children the most. Burchardt (2008: 37) confirms that the other factors that make poverty severe among children are: a combination of the above in conjunction with being a girl/woman aged 16 to 29; not having a partner; more children in the household; younger children in the household; and having lower, or no, educational qualifications.

#### **2.4.5 At-riskiness and Skip Generational Households**

The disadvantages of Zimbabwean at-risk students were further exacerbated by the burden of increased poverty when unemployment rose to 90 per cent (Samuels & Wells, 2009). The authors add that some of these factors caused mass migration as the living standards in Zimbabwe decreased by 150 per cent in the ten years after 1990. As with Zambia, HIV/AIDS wiped out the parenting generation with the result that many children did not grow up with their parents or other middle-aged adults, but with their grandparents and other older caregivers (Reijer, 2013). This observation had been earlier confirmed by HelpAge International (2008), who stated that a growing number of younger adults living with HIV and the surviving orphans and vulnerable children are looked after by the old. The effect of HIV/AIDS is confirmed as part of the disadvantageous problems of the negative shocks that fuel demographic change by increasing mortality and migration among the middle-aged generation due to conflict, war, epidemics and natural disasters (Samuels & Wells, 2009).

In his Zambian-based study, Reijer (2013) further observed that the children under these arrangements are associated with numerous disadvantages, including lower nutritional status, lower material well-being, a higher risk of dropping out of school and higher demands for labour. The earlier report by Samuels and Wells (2009) confirms that one-fifth of Zimbabwean children have been disadvantaged by being HIV/AIDS orphaned. The authors also confirm that roughly 60 per cent of all orphans live with their grandparents, who themselves are aged over

65. Thus, Reijer's (2013) study confirms regional similarities to Zimbabwean children's disadvantage of at-riskiness. The regional changing demographic landscape is characterized by old grandmother caregivers, who face further disadvantages with many physical and financial challenges for adequate care (Foster 2000; Madhavan, 2004; Rehman & Eloundou-Enyegue, 2007) in this skip-generation parenting, whereby orphaned children live with grandparents. In South Africa, orphans tend to stay with a female-headed household that is most likely to be poor when compared to male-headed households (Hutchinson 2007). Thus, an HIV situation can affect children as a push factor against HIV-affected children from staying in their original home.

Similar observations have been confirmed in Thailand where, due to HIV/AIDS, grandparents are the main carers for 55 per cent of single orphans and also the main carers for 67 per cent of double orphans (Knodel & Saengthienchai, 2005). The authors also note that siblings, especially sisters, are the carers for HIV-infected brothers and sisters, as well as for their children (Knodel & Saengthienchai, 2005).

Hutchinson (2007) confirms that more than 85 per cent of orphans in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda do not live with the surviving parent but with an extended family member, who is often a poor grandparent. Grandparents are carers in more than 50 per cent of the high prevalence countries (Monasch & Boerma, 2004). These elderly household heads in South Africa have not received any schooling (Hutchinson, 2007). This is also confirmed in Zimbabwe by Runhare and Gordon (2004), who state that teachers are concerned that elderly grandparents often have a very limited formal education and are unable to help the children in their care with homework and other school-related tasks. The link between chronic poverty and lack of educational access is also confirmed in a Kenyan study (Burke & Jayne, 2010). Situations of chronic poverty and orphanhood are possible causes of exploitation.

#### **2.4.6 At-riskiness and Orphanhood and Exploitation**

After parental death or family hardship, moving in with relatives is a common arrangement for most orphans in Zimbabwe as well as for other groups of disadvantaged children, such as those living with HIV/AIDS and those with sick parents, and they are vulnerable due to poverty, discrimination or exclusion (UNICEF, 2013). Zimbabwean customs and cultural belief systems

have predefined role players with the obligations to take over: the deceased's nearest male relative, such as a brother or a nephew, inherits the deceased man's wife and children (UNICEF, 2013).

Under the hardship of ESAP, some of these customs have resulted in severely challenged destitution, which has pushed many extended families beyond their ability to cope (UNICEF, 2013). Critics have tended to question the quality of life under the new family by asking who really benefitted more between the orphan and the hosting family and whether the hosting family has some other underlying motivation for taking in extra children in times of hardship. Some receiving families are motivated by altruism or social pressure; if not reluctant to accept these relatives (Eloundou-Enyegue & Stokes, 2002). Traditionally, in Botswana, orphaned children are cared for by the extended families. Due to the increased socio-economic strain of HIV and the numbers of orphans needing support, it is now difficult to get willing families, or indeed those able to do this, and it cannot always guarantee acceptable levels of support because these families allegedly sometimes take on orphans merely to benefit from government orphan packages (AVERT [Sa]).

Some host families are criticized for their desire to accept extra hands for their domestic labour needs with possible maltreatment of orphans. In Malawi, South Africa and Tanzania, it was established that all but a small minority of orphaned children are integrated into kinship, community and other support networks, according to Hosegood, Floyd, Marston, Hill, McGrath, Isingo, Crampin and Zaba (2007).

Guaranteeing the same standard of life that the orphans had before parental illness or death depends on the direction of fosterage flows along a socio-economic gradient (Eloundou-Enyegue & Kandiwa, 2008). These authors note that the gradient movements can be horizontal, downward or upward, with each type having different implications for the aggregate quality of life for the orphan: a downward movement is a great disadvantage and implies possible educational at-riskiness. There are concerns with the disadvantage of a horizontal or downward movement with relatives. Such households in Rwanda experience consumption shock and happen to be already poor on average, according to Case, Paxson and Ableidinger (2002), and as such get into even deeper poverty coupled with welfare loss with more mouths to feed.

There appears to be a link between large families and the high level of household population of six to eight members; a number that increases the difficulty of providing adequate coverage and public services, such as education (Bugembe, 2005). Similar observations are confirmed by UNICEF (2013) when they further state that children in these circumstances are disadvantaged by common unmet needs, such as education, food, medical care, clothes, basic expenses, school fees, materials and uniforms. These needs are also confirmed by Hallfors et al (2011). They additionally recommended adults to monitor school attendance and be ready to give help where it was needed. Without close connections to pro-social adults, peers and institutions, orphans experience possible health and behavioural problems (Hallfors et al, 2011). Such behavioural problems make it difficult for orphans to navigate the challenges and risks of adolescence while attending school with consistency.

Under the care of an adopting family, the limitations of resources disadvantages orphans due to the economic dictates reserving the little available for biological children over fostered children as if orphans are an undesirable burden, according to Goldberg and Short (2012). The authors confirm that there is segregation in the way fostering families looked after orphans when compared to how they looked after their own. First, orphans without a surviving parent are worse off. They also compare the treatment orphans received against absentee parents and conclude that absentee parent children are better looked after because their parents have the means of supervising the quality of treatment that their children receive. This is consistent with the observation that orphans and vulnerable children have a very low status in the community due to poor educational background, low income levels of orphans and guardians, limited vocational skills, stigmatization, social discrimination and poor implementation of government policies (SIRDEP, 2011).

Secondly, Goldberg and Short (2012) also confirm some measure of disadvantage based on the ages and sex of orphans, with the younger considered less troublesome. It may be the case that the young are less troublesome due to the disadvantage of being an orphan. This makes them easily intimidated into submission and too naive to observe or complain about ill treatment regarding the areas of orphan disadvantage: poverty; love and kin connection; caregiver character; perceptions of orphans; and community norms related to orphan care. Goldberg and Short (2012) further argue that orphans are considered a burden and are ill-treated where families and communities struggle to fend for themselves within the context of the disadvantage of poverty. Such an environment encourages orphans to opt for or be forced into early marriage

as some form of protective escapism from perceived disadvantages under fosterage (Bourdillon & Myers, 2013).

#### **2.4.7 At-riskiness and Forced Marriages**

It is claimed that, in South Africa, older people sometimes prefer younger partners for sex in cross-generational sex (Smith, 2002). In return for these liaisons, girls receive money for necessities, such as schoolbooks and food, and luxuries, such as trendy clothing, mobile phones, hairdressing and entertainment (Berman, 2004). The list of problems faced by orphans, and particularly girls, is inexhaustible because they are susceptible to psychological problems and the risk of forced sex (UNICEF, 2006) and forced marriages under these conditions of deprivation.

Early marriage or forced sex or attempting to force a child to have sex is regarded as a violation of the International Human Rights Instruments on Marriage, as follows:

Article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states:

- i) Men and women of full age have the right to marry and found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- ii) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties. Similar provisions are included in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Article 1 of the 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery includes in the institutions and practices similar to slavery:

Article 1(c) Any institution or practice whereby:

- i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family...

Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the 1964 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages state:

- i) No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in person...as prescribed by law.
- ii) States Parties to the present Convention shall...specify a minimum age for marriage (“not less than 15 years” according to the non-binding recommendation accompanying this Convention). No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interests of the intending spouses...
- iii) All marriages shall be registered...by the competent authority.

Article 16.1 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women prescribes equally for men and women:

- i) The same right to enter into marriage;
- ii) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.

Article 16.2 states:

The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.

Article XXI of the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states:

Child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited and effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be eighteen years.

(Adapted from UNICEF, 2001: 3)

The foregoing confirms that forced sex or forced marriage is probably difficult to define but may be any which has no proof of genuine consent (Rude-Antoine, 2005). This makes the definition elusive since it is not always possible to supply proof of the type of emotional threats

that can render individuals vulnerable and prevent them from resisting forced sex and marriage under the disadvantage of power differentials depicted through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances. However, these characteristics appear to be consistent with the risk faced by the socially excluded and isolated girls usually working as domestic workers, and in most cases are almost exclusively young and female (Thorsen, 2012). The risks for girls working as domestic workers is further illustrated by Erulkar and Ferede (2009), who state that it is the lowest type of work with the lowest status and the poorest pay, and the nature of the work keeps females inaccessible and socially isolated. They add that the domestic workers' workplace is a private residence within the domestic sphere with frequent long hours for little pay and few opportunities, if any, for social interaction.

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, according to Erulkar, Mekbib, Simie and Gulema (2006; 2007), such workers are confirmed as being mostly poor females who are working as many as 64 hours per week but who are earning an average of USD6 per month. They are sometimes punished physically or verbally for not doing work quickly enough, for breaking dishes, for failing to account for the revenues from vending and for being rude (Thorsen, 2012). The authors also note that domestic workers are sometimes deprived of food, are severely beaten and possibly escape into the streets. It is further observed that the conditions not only include long hours but control by their employers in such a way that they do not have recreation, socialization or participation in available youth programmes and services (Erulkar et al, 2006; 2007).

The disadvantage of being a girl from a poor family makes them face a higher risk of early withdrawal from school into domestic work. Poverty is the single most important factor, and the children may be sold, given to traffickers, sent out to work for household survival, fostered by kin as a result of socio-economic crisis, sent to fill a labour gap in the receiving household or to pursue education, and sometimes of the child's own accord (Thorsen, 2012). There are no guarantees of safety against physical abuse and possible forced sex or early marriages as child brides from school (Binkley, 2010). This probably corroborates Crush and Tevera's findings (2010), who also note a decline in Zimbabwe's completion rate at O-Level, which shows a widening gap between boys and girls, with 93 per cent of boys completing in 2006, compared to 83 per cent of girls. This 10 per cent disparity is possibly due to the effect of the disadvantage of belonging to the 'wrong' sex.

Early marriages are inherently defective in that, the younger the girl is, the more she lacks status and power within that marriage (Binkley 2010). Without power to negotiate their sexual lives, these girls have a diminished ability to negotiate safe sex or topics relating to family planning (Binkley, 2010). This also makes it difficult to avoid an ‘asymmetric’ marriage, which lowers the chances of escaping the probability of HIV/AIDS infection (Bayisenge, 2010).

The widening gap between boys and girls is more consistent with the Zimbabwean study carried out by Hallfors et al (2011). This study further confirms that a higher proportion of these school dropouts comprises orphans, and also reiterate that orphans are more vulnerable to early sex as well as early marriage, pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS (Hallfors et al, 2011). In explaining the close association between early marriage and risk to health, the authors condemn early marriages because of their capacity to elevate the risk of HIV and the herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV-2). They add that this is based on the evidence that, among married women aged 14 to 19 years in urban Harare, half of whom are orphans, 18 per cent are infected with HIV and 42 per cent with HSV-2, compared to a 6 per cent prevalence for both sexually-transmitted infections among those who never married.

Early marriages are also closely associated with domestic violence in Yemen, according to Benninger-Budel and Bourke-Martignoni (2002). The authors state that domestic violence is confirmed by 46.3 per cent of women where the spouses or other family members are the perpetrators of the violence at some point in the women’s lives (Benninger-Budel & Bourke-Martignoni, 2002).

Perhaps the actual problem is the reality that younger women remain attractive to older men, as may be explained by the parental investment theory that it is due to the young women’s signs of fertility, youthfulness and physical attractiveness. Conversely, women are drawn to older men, who often typically have greater resources and relationship commitment (Iredale, Van Vugt & Dunbar, 2008). The older male and the younger female’s attraction motivation is further observed and confirmed by Beauclair and Delva (2013), Hawkins, Price and Mussa (2012) and LeClerc-Madala (2008). They indicate that women seek financial security and material objects which complement men’s mating tactics in age-disparate and intergenerational sex or ‘sugar daddy’ affairs, in a development that places disadvantaged girls at high risk if they are poor and out of school or fail to raise the fees required. The same trend is confirmed in Zimbabwe, where 15 per cent of young women who had had sexual intercourse in the year preceding the survey

had sex with a man ten or more years older (Mutingwend, 2014). Hallfors et al (2011) also suggest that some of these girls yield to pressure from their families to marry much older husbands as part of the religious teachings of some churches.

It appears that, while both sexes find each other attractive for the purpose of procreation, the lack of financial resources or the desire for material objects corrupts this into a competitive behaviour that thrives on the principles of economics and materialistic considerations. It is probably these materialistic factors that make disadvantaged girls more prone to risky behaviour. Perhaps it needs to be acknowledged that the phenomenon of asymmetric relationships, as in older females or 'sugar mummies' to younger men (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Nyanzi & Nyanzi-Wakholi, 2004) is now increasingly talked about. If such sex-related generosity and behaviour is true, it may be interesting to find out the extent to which this relates and works to improve school access for young disadvantaged boys as well. What can be assumed to be possible are the increased chances of cross-age HIV/AIDS infection and a ruined future for the young. Whether both types offered equal levels of financial security and material objects was not easy to confirm. What was certain was that in male/female relations, the affairs provided feelings of love, increased self-esteem, self-confidence, raised status among peers, and compliance with cultural and traditional prescriptions (Beauclair & Delva, 2013; Hawkins et al, 2012; LeClerc-Madala, 2008) at the expense of a clean bill of health.

In addition, with regard to age difference attraction, people have the mistaken belief that, through older men and younger women intergenerational sexuality, the more likely HIV free they are likely to be (Richmond & Gestrin, 2009). This is actually the process by which power differentials are established between sex partners, and these elders make the weak and young particularly vulnerable to HIV infection (Smith, 2002). After the February 2000 Constitution Referendum in which ZANU PF lost by 697,754 votes to 578,000 (Slaughter & Nolan, 2000) ZANU youth militia were co-opted, licensed and encouraged by the party-qua-state to form the Green Bombers (Onslow, 2011), and violence was used. Where violence in conflict has been used, it has included sexual violence in order to enforce allegiance by terrorizing the civilian population, causing people to flee and leave their homes and their belongings or as a means to enforce allegiance with an increased susceptibility to HIV (Bartels, Scott, Leaning, Mukwege & Lipton, 2010). Victims experience increased genital trauma, coital injuries, anal penetration, mass rape, ulcerative sexually-transmitted infections, such as HIV (Bartels et al, 2010), and

other sexually-transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhoea and syphilis, causing the death of some girls before their 20th birthday (Mutingwende, 2014).

Socio-economic instability encourages social tension, as observed in Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe, where the conditions of war and civil conflict encouraged early marriages used as a protective mechanism or survival strategy (Bayisenge, 2010), while those with power exploited the weaker and displaced populations. Zimbabwe's internally displaced are estimated to total up to one million people (United Nations [UN] 2010). Being displaced poses the risk of failure by families to protect their daughters from sexual violence, and so marriage to warlords or other authority figures is sometimes used as a form of improved protection (Bayisenge, 2010). Conditions of conflict increase such risks of failed protection for young girl orphans or those separated from their parents or relatives from the risk of marauding militias.

A typical journalistic account from just outside Chimhete, where militias are alleged to have shielded a repeat child rapist of a 13-year-old girl, is as follows:

*Each time he raped me he would threaten me with death,' said the girl fighting back tears. 'At times, he would give me some sweets (lollipops) after raping me. She said the man would use a knife and "knuckleduster" to threaten her (Chimhete 2010).*

This is consistent with the observation that to be female is disadvantageous, and sexual violence is rooted in power imbalance and structural inequality between men and women (UNICEF, 2013). Forced sex and early marriage can cause the risk of early pregnancy, and this is a great contributor towards mother mortality (Bayisenge, 2010). The author suggests an even earlier cut-off age of 18 before marriage for the safety of the under-15s through state legislation.

It is therefore difficult to control entry into both formal and informal marriage unions even though all marriages below the age of 18 years are to girls who are physically, physiologically and psychologically not ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing (Bayisenge, 2010). This risk of sexual immaturity is further elaborated on by Binkley (2010), who stated that underdeveloped bodies subjected to early sexuality and child birth before maturity are the largest cause of death for women of childbearing age, accounting for most child deaths and for 42 per cent of all deaths for women between the ages of 15 and 49.

Survivors often have long-term adverse medical and social problems of incontinency due to the disintegration of the vaginal wall between the bladder and the rectum (Binkley, 2010).

The above is consistent with the argument that to be female and disadvantaged is risky under socio-economic meltdown environments, as appears to be the case for Zimbabwe since the introduction of ESAP. The downturn may have caused some families to regard investing their daughters in early marriages as an economic survival strategy (Bayisenge, 2010). Child marriage affects girls in far greater numbers than boys, and with more intensity, according to UNICEF (2014). Zimbabwean socio-cultural values combining power, age-old patriarchal traditions and existing gender role models based on male superiority (Every Culture [Sa]) in years of poverty and HIV expose young Zimbabwean girls to added risk. These young girl-mothers are not guaranteed secure marriages, and this makes them attempt survival with little skills, which undermines their social mobility and amplifies intergenerational inequities (Binkley, 2010). Yemen has only 23 per cent of women among its working population and, with little education, they are underpaid and harassed, leaving the majority of them to work in unpaid productive activities, such as agriculture (Binkley, 2010).

Therefore, policies that impoverish families make girls more vulnerable by restraining them from enjoying free educational access and also denying them free choice in their sexual and working lives when compared to their male counterparts.

#### **2.4.8 At-riskiness and Child Labour**

The deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe fit into the type of environment that the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Sa) suggests creates conditions for child labour: defined as a situation in which children work for more than one hour during the reference period. Family disadvantage makes children engage in child labour under formal and informal economies, inside and outside family settings, work for pay or profit (in cash or in kind, part time or full time), or as a domestic worker outside the child's own household for an employer (with or without pay) (ILO, 2013). The ILO elaborates this by stating that child labour includes:

*Working during school or outside school hours when children have to:  
participate in hazardous work with possible adverse effects on their safety,*

*health and moral development due to night work and long hours of work, exposure to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads; and work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging their health. Where children are further disadvantaged by orphanhood, they are more compelled to enter the labour market for survival and/or to help support other family members, and may do so without any clear contracts at all (Chileshe-Chalo, Rau & Amorim 2003: 15)*

The ILO (Sa) further states that child labour appears under several disadvantaging characteristics, such as child slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, use of children in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, and all other work likely to be harmful or hazardous to the health, safety or morals of girls and boys under 18 years of age. Most of the above characteristics of child labour are consistent with ILO's (Sa) observation that as many as five million children in Zimbabwe between the ages of 5 and 17 years are being forced to work.

The mix of work and study among students aged between 12 and 14 in a study in Colombia and Mexico is confirmed by Kit (2012) as increasing the risk of dropping out from school compared to non-working students. This characteristic of child labour is probably the reason why some critics find it unacceptable among the under 18s, which also harms or exploits them in some way, such as physically, mentally and morally, or by blocking their access to education, according to Images of Child Labour (Sa). It is further argued that the combined effects of the disadvantage of diseases such as HIV and poverty disadvantages children more by resulting in the affected children participating in child labour with associated risks, according to Siaens (2003).

The poorer a country, the higher the rate of child labour participation among children aged between the ages of 5 and 14, as confirmed by Harsch (2001: 14), who states that 41 per cent are from Africa, 21 per cent from Asia and 17 per cent from Latin America. This is partly due

to the fact that fees are needed for school access: fee-paying secondary schooling participation is heavily influenced by household income (Lewin, 2007) and, the more the fees, the more likely children from such families are to become child labourers. Since Africa is the poorest of the three continents, then, put bluntly, 'poverty is the problem', declares Harsch (2001); a fact which supports the argument that a government must never impoverish its citizens.

The belief that the conditions pushing children into labour are consistent with general poverty is confirmed in India, where, as with Nigeria and Thailand, children work for either their household or for commercial reasons in order to increase family productivity through increasing each family member's workload, according to Sukhontha (2006). The author links this to the risk of school absenteeism and the disadvantage of being female, with females withdrawing from school more. Mathur, Rajagopal and Bhargava (2004) observed that Indian children work in agricultural work, look after cattle or younger siblings, do household work, and work in hotels and roadside restaurants in Rajasthan.

Parental poverty is also confirmed as the reason why children are used as commodities or 'human mortgages' for securing loans, which disadvantages children against independent self-development (Mathur et al, 2004). This is practised in India and in Zimbabwe as informal employment, occasionally involving longer hours, lower pay and sometimes concealed as work for the family under fictitious kinship ties (Bourdillon, 2009). In an environment of high HIV incidence and an increasingly inflationary economy, such as in Zimbabwe, that situation has the probability of only worsening children's risk of drifting into child labour. In Uganda, children enter the labour market at a very young age; a fact condemned as affecting the growth and well-being of children because they will only grow up to experience extreme poverty (Bugembe, 2005).

Critics of child labour argue against what they see as its trigger for many secondary school students' withdrawals, according to Kit (2012), who adds that working children's school experience also gets compromised through the deterioration of personal experience and lower expectations relating to the benefits of remaining in school. Such children face the gloomy prospect of withdrawing, and yet again, their parents can pledge the same children into financial bondage.

Studies in Zambia in 1999 confirmed that 595,000 children aged between 5 and 17 had participated in some form of child labour. This figure equally represents both boys and girls (Rau, 2002). At the same time, existing labour laws in Zambia did not cover child labour on farms or in the informal sector, resulting in children working without legal protection. In Ethiopia, children are exploited through lower wages than adults, are not unionized and are preferred because they do not demand workers' rights (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour [IPEC] (2010). They are also the preferred workers, with employers regarding them as more efficient in certain types of work when compared to adults, according to IPEC (2010).

Child labour closely relates to the poverty levels of the respective countries and communities, and this partly explains why Latin America, Asia and Africa are at the top of the child labour charts (IPEC 2010), as well as Zimbabwe consistently since the 1990s. Ethiopia illustrates why some African countries end up with child labour: poverty in Ethiopia is chronic due to, among others issues, population pressure, land degradation, unemployment and under-employment among adults and school leavers (youth) (IPEC, 2010). With land degradation, the only easily established industry, agriculture, which happens to be a mass employer in Africa, ceased to function at full capacity as employer of 26 per cent of the workforce since 2000 ([www.issafrica.org](http://www.issafrica.org) [Sa]). This shortfall appears to have increased the number of poorer families, which has most likely increased the chances of trapping children into child labour, little education, poor wages and exploitation, and without legal safeguards.

Recent studies confirm that Zimbabwean children work in a variety of contexts outside normal formal and legal structures, and these informal, sometimes hidden, forms of employment are difficult to monitor or control in terms of type of work, hours and remuneration (Bourdillon, 2009). In addition, many children do unpaid work for their families, for example, agricultural or care work. Such work is not easily controlled and some children are exploited and receive insufficient attention to their health and education (Bourdillon 2009).

In Zimbabwe, approximately 88 per cent of economically active children aged between 5 and 17 come from households with incomes below ZWD2,000 (USD36) per month, and parents justified this by explaining that they need more to supplement household income or to help the household enterprise (Harsch, 2001). It is possible that some of this work is exploitative or dangerous work (Bourdillon, 2009).

Similar observations in Tanzania indicate that poor parents have no choice because, as with Ethiopia, poverty is, among other causes, related to the reason why there is child labour (IPEC, 2010). Thus, child labour has a close relationship with causing the socio-economic conditions of underdevelopment and poverty to deteriorate. The situation in Ethiopia is almost identical to the Zimbabwe scenario above, where, out of the 90 per cent of children in child labour activities, 23.8 per cent stated they were in it to supplement family income, with 66.2 per cent stating that they wanted to improve family income (IPEC, 2010).

The disadvantages of the HIV scourge may have added another factor to the risk of child labour by killing parents or guardians, leaving children exposed. This puts the surviving families deeper into poverty, placing an even greater burden on the survivors, including children (Harsch, 2001). In Tanzania, some plantation employers justify child labour on the premise that the adult workforce is fast diminishing because of the high incidence of HIV among many workers (Harsch, 2001). This creates a genuine shortage of labourers that can only be filled by the only potentially available workers: children.

In general, it appears that adolescents become attracted to work because of poverty in their households. They then seek employment to satisfy a genuine need in labour-intensive industries like agriculture. On a personal level, they do so in order to pay their fees, various levies and for uniforms. Hence, the attraction for ‘work for education’ schools in the Zimbabwean eastern highlands. The children in these schools work between 35 and 40 hours a week for schools’ estates (Mangoma & Bourdillon, 2001). In Ethiopia, labour-intensive industries that attract child labour are stone quarrying, firewood collection and charcoal burning (Martin, 2010). Either way, a poor child appears not to have any choice but to become a breadwinner and, most likely, with the result that they attend school less regularly and possibly drop out of school in order to work full time. However, there appears to be a sense in which children are easily exploited under some cultural perspectives due to the illusion of labour as an acculturation process for children and supposed to be good for them.

#### **2.4.9 At-riskiness: Child Labour and Cultural Exploitation**

Child work is part of the Ethiopian culture, with children working as part of their acquisition of cultural values (IPEC, 2010), and, accordingly, the Ethiopian cultural philosophy regards childhood as the right age for the development of work skills. Culturally, therefore, child labour

is an acculturation process under which children need be exposed to some form of work at home early in life, so they assist their parents (IPEC, 2010) for later life skills survival. Formally accepting child work is sometimes criticized, but working children in Peru express their misgiving of efforts that condemn children's work, according to Bourdillon (2009). There is increasing thought in favour of working children, whose conditions of work need to be improved however. This can be done by stopping the worst forms of child labour: principally: any form of forced labour; child pornography and prostitution; the use of children for illicit activities; and work that is in any way harmful to a child's health, safety or morals (Bourdillon, 2009).

Bourdillon (2009) argues in favour of children working if they are disadvantaged. He further argues that such children need the opportunity to access skills and achieve financial independence and respect within their families. It therefore appears that critics of culturally motivated child work will place children in a worse predicament with worse consequences, which are less favourable. If children stop working, they miss the opportunity to acquire skills. Ethically, every parent is a surviving child who had some survival and cultural learning to do, and, for poor families, this is the only way by which they can enable some learning for their children, short of which the children themselves will be in even greater poverty (World Vision [Sa]). In developing countries, many family-run businesses, such as restaurants, employ their own children to help out and learn practical skills ([www.theweek.co.uk](http://www.theweek.co.uk), 2008). If these children do not participate in culturally-approved child work, they are likely to face worse emotional distress and possibly, due to lack of food and money, become desperate enough to force girls into more exploitative situations, such as prostitution in an even more harmful environment (World Vision [Sa]).

Since most African governments accept the principle of children helping directly on their own farms or in informal sector activities (Harsch, 2001), they are often not even prepared for the phenomenon of legislating against child labour. The only country in the world where child labour legislation has been promulgated in defence of children's rights to still be able to attend school is Bolivia. However, arguments have been raised on the premise that, even with the law, child labour in whatever form still contravenes the ILO's minimum working age protocol and that the practice still remains an abandonment of a child's right to a childhood (McQuade, 2014). It is not clear how far the Bolivian children's trade union has been effective in warding

off exploitation. The line between child work and child labour may be too obscured for ease of distinction between the positive aspects of child work, and this may be explained within the historical context of child work/labour, which has the characteristic of even further cultural disadvantages for Zimbabwe.

#### **2.4.10 At-riskiness and Bonded Labour**

To be a child in a poor Indian household can also mean living under the possible threat of bondage as a virtual commercial item for financial security bonds to be pledged as a labourer against loans advanced to one's parents (Mathur et al, 2004). The same practice in Ethiopia pledges children like commodities that are convertible into a commercial value by generating income in time of poverty (IPEC, 2010). When households cannot meet the costs of education or when the education system shows signs of failure and deteriorating standards, poor parents appear to see no options for their children but to simply channel them into labour as the only option available to fight prevailing poverty, hardship and sickness.

In the Mt Darwin District of Zimbabwe, more boys than girls left school early or did not enrol at all because they crossed the border into Mozambique for cross-border trading and sought employment as cattle herders or in other farming activities (Runhare & Gordon, 2004). Journalistic sources confirm the same in other provinces of Zimbabwe. Besides HIV, child labour is linked to many other factors, for example, economic instability and the reduction of feeding schemes at primary schools in Matabeleland Province, where some children are giving up school due to poor resources and are heading into Botswana and South Africa to seek informal work (Thabela, 2010). This tendency appears more noticeable where there are many children in the household: families with larger numbers of children are more susceptible to give up their children for work in order to augment family income (Edet & Etim, 2013). The disadvantage of poverty in big families is confirmed in Mexican households, where Levison, Moe and Knaul (2001) established a negative relationship between the quantity of children and the quality of lifestyle, which are possible push factors into child-bonded labour.

#### **2.4.11 At-riskiness and Gender Disadvantages**

Family poverty exacerbates children's riskiness with a gender dimension across the three continents, with the African girl child's probability at 37 per cent more likely compared to the

Asian girl child at 20 per cent and the Latin American girl child at 11 per cent among the sample of ILO figures (Harsch, 2001: 14).

Culturally, some families appear to discriminate against the girl child in favour of the boy child, not only as a result of the HIV/AIDS issue, as discussed earlier, but due to family economic dictates. Economic hardship only provides the convenient excuse to exclude girls from access to education (Lockheed, 2008). This is reiterated by Runhare and Gordon (2004) when they highlight that differential attitudes and treatment for boys/men and girls/women in society in general exist in Zimbabwe. Girls from poor families and socially-excluded groups are often tacitly allowed to drop out early, as opposed to boys (Lockheed, 2008). This is because of the economic perception of fewer returns and benefits accumulating from educating girls in a poor household when families look at the potential extra income that they can get from the work she can do for the family (Barrera-Osorio, 2008). The economic principles of lost opportunity cost due to school attendance for girls creates bias against girl school attendance for an extra pair of hands at home as boys get prepared for formal employment. The family view is probably that schooling costs the parents direct costs at the expense of the household and farm tasks when the girl could better spend time doing household tasks (Al-Mekhlafy, 2008). This view probably dates back as far as the start of formal employment in Zimbabwe.

History indicates that boys were better favoured because they could easily secure employment in Zimbabwean cities, roads and mines. Cities, in practice, recognized boys as the ideal workers and therefore permitted them to stay in the city under what appeared to be better prospects for paid jobs. This was supported by further assumptions such as that boys had the physical endurance and stamina for work on roads, mines and railways (Konadu-Agyemang & Panford, 2006). The workplace environment, such as Harare city's Mbare residential hostels, were even historically meant to accommodate black males only because females were supposed to live in rural areas while the men worked in the city, after which they would retire and die in their rural homes as if they were temporary citizens of the city while they worked (Chirisa, 2014). Up to about 1980, mining industries only wanted male workers (Iliffe, 2005). Wives were banned from Rhodesian cities where males comprised 99 per cent of the population, and women were arrested for breaking the law by coming into town instead of staying in the rural areas with their children (Chung & Kaarsholm, 2006).

This historical background has probably established a perception where education as a tool for employment is better suited for the boy child than the girl child. This relationship between education and work has survived into today's culture, thereby explaining why families are more likely to support the boy's education. It is probably an established tradition valuing the boy's acquisition of the skills to communicate in the workplace (Konadu-Agyemang & Panford, 2006) and girls have, in some families never been seen to ever need such skills.

The culturally, patrilineal society of Zimbabwe consistently highly regards men's traditional role of working in the wider world in order to support the family; practices which socialize the young to accept sexually-differentiated roles (Hoz, Negev & Kaye, 2000; Kambarami, 2006). This probably explains why, for poor families, boys will nearly always stay in school. The result is that boys are socialized and better educated in preparation for their economic advancement in the world of work, and view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households, while females, until recently, only needed basic literacy and then became obedient and submissive housekeepers (Hoz et al, 2000; Kambarami, 2006).

For disadvantaged families surviving on scarce resources, boys' education is therefore a means to the acquisition of modern skills with which to participate in the modern economy and to better protect and look after their sisters (Kambarami, 2006). Current evidence however disputes this outdated preferential treatment of boys over girls because, increasingly, girls are proving that they have the potential to match or even outperform their male counterparts in school work. For poor families, as observed by teachers, the home environment and the girls' upbringing mitigates against them (Runhare & Gordon, 2004). This creates the disadvantage in that sisters are nothing other than 'marriage material', potentially away from home and their parental family. The girls' disadvantage or the boys' advantage lies in the fact that, in contrast, and to the boys' credit, they do not migrate with marriage but stay within the parent family (Konadu-Agyemang & Panford, 2006). This gives boys the added economic value as the inheritors of and survivors of the family name, as family leader and through bringing additional members into the family as their offspring (Human Rights Forum, 2001). A family that has no son to continue the process is therefore thought to have disappeared forever (Trinh [Sa]). A son represents a guarantee of descendants through the male line (Culture of Zimbabwe [Sa]), as follows:

*If you have a son, you can say you have a descendant. But you cannot say so even if you have ten daughters (Trinh [Sa]).*

*In contrast, the girl child grew up only to be married and after marriage moved away into her husband's home (Culture of Zimbabwe [Sa]).*

Thus, the disadvantage for girls is the view that the girl is not an investment for their parents due to the apparent fact that, as a potential wife of a different family, their affiliation becomes their husband's once they marry (Shapiro & Tambeshe, 2001). The family's economic background explains why pooling resources into the education of a girl is certainly not the poor's priority since it is not an investment for the family. It does not guarantee financial return for the parents' family, and it also does not guarantee continuous return in old age, according to the old age security hypothesis which motivates child rearing in the first place (Rihani, 2006). Child rearing and sending them to school is a transactional investment relationship where parents lend resources to the young, who will repay them by caring for them in their old age (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2004).

Poor families can only rely on their children because, in the case of Zimbabwe, the national economy does not provide substantial welfare support in old age (Brym & Lie, 2007) and more so during inflation-fueled family hardships, as appears to be the case during the current ESAP economy in Zimbabwe. The non-existence of state-sponsored social security programmes creates uncertainty with regard to the assets required for old age (Rammohan, 2000). Even in their prime, parents need their biological maximum number of children for labour, and these children are their old age security, which fortifies parents by ensuring that their son has a good education and they can provide him with a farm or part of the family's wealth (Brym & Lie 2007). As family security assets, children help achieve the twin objectives of higher family income and greater old age security (Rammohan, 2000). Children 'cushion' parents against poverty in the probability that at least one son will provide financial and emotional security in old age (Rammohan, 2000).

The foreseeable returns from children both as labourers and providers of support in old age explains why this kind of thinking is against the girl child's education. There is no incentive for households to invest in the girl's schooling because of the obvious associated opportunity cost (Rammohan, 2000). The temptation for parents to substitute girls' education is an ever

present temptation. An increase in schooling costs has the same effect as a decrease in the household's budget. Hence, the effect of an increase in hours the children will be required for labour, which reduces child schooling hours.

Early marriage is encouraged in some families (Hoz et al 2000). Some households quickly 'give up' on the slightest pretext (Rihani, 2006). This is why more girls than boys can be out of school regardless of whether they have been orphaned or not (Schenk, Michaelis, Sapiano, Brown & Weiss, 2010). This is contrary to enlightened thinking: the girl is a future mother of mankind and as the actual custodian of human economic development:

*...an educated girl is likely to marry later, have fewer children and provide better care to herself and her children than a girl without education. As more women get educated, there is a cumulative effect on more households with respect to fertility. As more households become smaller, the provision of care improves for more children. Taken together, the benefit of greater education among women adds up to a virtuous circle of social development (Mehrotra, 2000).*

The above sums up the extent to which families and the nation are disadvantaged by the unfair effects of prejudices that create gender imbalance in the development of manpower within high school education. This is why prevailing household poverty, gendered division of domestic labour, family and socio-cultural attitudes sometimes constrain girls' chances of receiving an education (Colclough, Rose & Tembon, 2000). Increasing school fees of between 200 per cent and 2,000 per cent i.e. from ZWD5,000 (USD6) to ZWD15,000 (USD18), as was the case in some high-density suburban schools, or from ZWD200,000 (USD242) to ZWD1 million (USD1,213) at a low-density middle income high school in Harare, was enough to discourage some families, in January 2003, according to IRIN (2007). During the same period, a family of about four people possibly required as much as ZWD20,000 (USD24) per day for transport and other daily allowances, plus fees (IRIN, 2007).

Keeping girls at home from school reversed Zimbabwe's impressive strides towards gender parity in school enrolment (IRIN, 2007). After girls achieved literacy, their education became insecure in times of economic and political turbulence: they were to stay at home or be pushed out into marriage.

Early marriage is alleged to be for the daughters' protection but, apparently, it is more for the parental family's economic survival (Kirk, 2008). An early marriage is the best economic option for a poor family to guard against the potential of the high-risk behaviour of seeking money on the streets, according to IRIN (2007). This alleviates family hardship.

Daughters can also be used in trade as commodities or pawns in exchange for grain (Tavuyanago & Mbenene, 2008). There is no statistical confirmation of how widespread the girl disadvantage in Zimbabwe is, but the 2015 story of arrests over the marriage and pregnancy of a 12 year-old girl to Madzibaba Roderick according to [www.zimnowmedia.wordpress.com](http://www.zimnowmedia.wordpress.com) (2017) confirms the extent of the girl child's at-riskiness. In a similar story, one girl was sold for an amount just enough for two sacks of maize, according to Bayisenge (2010). This was a sale to a 40-year-old man, whose previous wife had died of AIDS. The practice resulted in a risk for the uninfected girl from a possibly HIV-infected man.

Harsh economic hardship and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which worsened most families' ability to educate their children, added to the circumstances negatively affecting children's education, especially the girl child (Runhare & Gordon, 2004). Similar cultural practices have been confirmed in the Low Veld areas of Zimbabwe in Boli, Chambuta, Chilonga, Chiredzi, Malipati and part of Chikombedzi (Tavuyanago & Mbenene, 2008). In times of crisis, drought and famine years, Shangani culture allows elders to force-marry young girls (Tavuyanago & Mbenene, 2008). They are forced to drop out of school and start families with old men who have other wives already (Mtimba, 2011). The right of a girl to choose a husband of her choice when old enough (after age 16) and at the right time is suspended in order to protect the right of the family to survive against drought and economic catastrophe.

The above practice is justified as a choice between starvation and survival; it saves the lives of other family members from the ravaging hunger made worse by the absence of government food hand-outs (Mtimba, 2011). The consideration now is survival, where education is almost a distant luxury for the future. Without an education, those girls are less likely to have meaningful economic opportunities and yet their household economic and cultural situations do not allow for their economic liberation through education. This undermines social mobility and amplifies intergenerational inequities (Binkley, 2010).

## **2.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF AT-RISKINESS**

### **2.5.1 At-riskiness and Stress and Self-esteem**

Stress and self-esteem relate to the worsening Zimbabwe situation, where some of the common issues for adolescents are: the high unemployment rate; inflation; government-sponsored violence; and HIV. Dass-Brailsford (2005) also confirmed the importance of maintaining resilience in the face of stressors for children's learning in South Africa. In the study, Dass-Brailsford (2005) identified the factors of school children's stressors relating to poverty: lack of food; deprived community surroundings; lack of basics such as clothing and shoes; poor transport and recreational facilities; use of English in schools instead of the mother tongue; worries about school fees; violence; and poor accommodation.

In Uganda, affected adolescents acquired psychopathological behaviour and were involved in crime, drug abuse and violence, recklessly exposing themselves to HIV (Bugembe, 2005). In a similar research carried out in Zimbabwe, the same was confirmed by Nyamukapa, Gregson, Wambe, Mushore, Lopman, Mupambireyi, Nhongo and Jukes (2009), who confirm that the effects of orphanhood, such as trauma, being out of school, being cared for by a non-parent, inadequate care, child labour, physical abuse, stigma and discrimination contribute to increased levels of distress. Unless addressed, these adolescents can possibly fail in life. Accepting failure will be tantamount to accepting the perpetuation of the cycles of poverty, resulting in intergenerational and/or chronic poverty (Bugembe, 2005).

In a further piece of research carried out in Zimbabwe it was established that stress levels are greater among orphans: psychological distress in childhood is more common in orphans (Nyamukapa et al, 2009). The same was confirmed in a piece of South African research (Cluver et al, 2007). In addition, high among the major causes of stress is the shortage of basic needs or extreme poverty (Nyamukapa et al, 2009).

In Uganda, a concern was raised and recommendations made that school administration should arrange for counselling services to enable affected adolescents to persevere and resist the 'push out' factors (Bugembe, 2005) from school. This echoes Nyamukapa et al (2009), who recommend launching community-based counselling, support for caregivers and courses in parenting skills and responsibilities. The authors hope that this will help support orphans and

empower them. However, Dass-Brailsford (2005) emphasizes that the individual student needs resilience to survive. She adds a few needs. These are that children need to be goal oriented, initiative and motivated. She also states that they additionally require family role model support, which is a challenge for orphans. Further, Dass-Brailsford (2005) suggests that students may survive stressors through community support but, where communities are themselves an aggregate of impoverished and stressed individuals, it is hard to see how they can afford support for anyone else other than themselves.

## **2.6 AT-RISKINESS AND SCHOOL STRUCTURE**

### **2.6.1 At-riskiness and School Environmental Safety**

According to Patrick and Jane (2013), Zimbabwean schools have been so chaotically affected since the 1990's socio-economic meltdown that some schools lack resources; both material and human. This means that classrooms lack furniture, causing students to sit on the ground. Students are then required to wash their uniforms daily. Runhare and Gordon (2004) confirm additional shortages in Zimbabwean schools as being textbooks and chalkboards, and add that these infrastructural shortages are worse for girls, for example, they lack sanitary pads, causing hygiene issues and embarrassment, and so girls abscond from school when they are menstruating.

Such an environment may explain what appears to be significant teacher resignations and migration since 1990. Perhaps most importantly is the effect of HIV/AIDS on school resources. An alarming number of teacher HIV/AIDS-related sickness, absenteeism and death saw many Zambian parents perceive the education system to be collapsing (Rau, 2002). This was due to a combination of the effects of HIV, by 1999, affecting two-thirds of the teacher training output from colleges, resulting in high death rates. Teachers' classroom absence was so high that parents felt that their children received poor-quality education due to the disruption. Some children repeated classes while others just stopped seeing the purpose, which made parents fail to commit their children's time to school.

Crush and Tevera (2010) further confirm the similarities between Zimbabwe and Zambian school environments. Teacher mortality is also an issue in Zimbabwe, whereby, in 2001, 4 per cent of teachers died. The majority of these deaths were from AIDS-related illnesses. In

addition, the same issue of teacher absenteeism was confirmed by Crush and Tevera (2010): absenteeism, erratic attendance, underperformance due to chronic and opportunistic infections, and funeral attendance all contributed to the lowering of the quality of teaching in Zimbabwe as more teachers succumbed to HIV/AIDS infection. The authors also confirm high teacher turnover due to unsatisfactory working conditions and wages.

As school environment factors all these potentially increase school dropout, with children becoming less eager to advance their education. In the worst case scenario, parents will not even see the value of education. In India, the combined effect of poverty has caused parents to give up on their children's education, resulting in half the researched children in Rajasthan never having been to school (Mathur et al, 2004).

In addition to the resources effect of HIV/AIDS, Patrick and Jane (2013) add that those teachers still in service are demoralized and survive through cross-border trading, leaving schools and students unattended, and also demand direct payment for children to receive private lessons at home, in churches and in other unapproved places. Furthermore, some school environments permit student abuse through gender stereotyping of social roles and activities in schools (Runhare & Gordon, 2004). Some teachers remove girls from classes to cook at school functions, prepare breakfast or lunch for teachers, run errands, clean teachers' houses and also sexually harass them (Rihani, 2006; WHO, 2005).

This is consistent with Shumba's (2001) observations confirming unsafe school environments where sexual abuse and sexual harassment within the school is possible. Such environments confirm the disadvantages of verbal teasing, derision and other behaviour aimed at belittling and embarrassing girls (Konadu-Agyemang & Panford, 2006). Also confirmed at Zimbabwean tertiary institutions was the further disadvantage of female students, who experienced forced dates and transactional sex/sexual favours with teachers and lecturers in exchange for high marks and good grades (Akpo, 2008; Perezniето, Harper, Clench & Coarasa, 2010; Plan West Africa, 2008). While the marks for grades form of risk has not been researched in Zimbabwean secondary schools, it may also be a possible additional disadvantage and risk. What has been confirmed, according to Kane (2004), is the fact that older men and boys prey on young school girls, luring them into sexual activity with money, status symbols and promises of marriage.

In a sense, the real problem of at-riskiness within school environments includes the institutionalized hierarchical power structure of schools which give all the power to teachers to pass or fail students. The motivation to be rewarded a pass mark possibly makes students powerless and compliant to the teachers' or lecturers' power to unethically exercise that power unfairly in school. Hence, the observation that the immoral among them use the same power to enforce their gender and authority to coerce and date young girls (Plan West Africa, 2004). Power may be viewed as the ability of a group to get another group to take some form of desired action; in this case, as non-consensual power and by force (Holmes, Hughes & Julian, 2012). Despite the poor wages for Zimbabwean teachers, they are still in the position of having some income and status above some poor families and therefore coerce parents in the form of extra pay, food, clothing and accommodation (Patrick & Jane, 2013). The authors condemn this for its divisive and segregatory effect on students from poor backgrounds, and state that this is a violation of the principles of equity and social justice in Zimbabwean education.

With the prevailing poverty and destitution, it is possible that, besides marks, girls also become desperate for basic items, not necessarily luxuries; just basic items for a student to live and, for poor girls, this can mean almost everything: school fees, books, uniforms, toiletries and transport (Akpo, 2008; Grundy, 2008; Kane, 2004). Enlisting older males or sugar daddies and taxi drivers in transactional sex for food, school materials and tuition in South Africa is common among girls in order for them to gain status among their peers (Akpo, 2008; Al-Mekhlafy, 2008; Plan West Africa, 2008), even if that is for the purpose of sharing the few cents that the lecturer has (Pereznieto et al, 2010).

Zimbabwean headmasters mete out corporal punishment on boys' buttocks and log this under Article 241 of the Criminal (Codification and Reform) Act and Article 66 of the Education Act of 2004: Circular P35 (School Discipline, Expulsion and Corporal Punishment) but, in practice, Shumba (2001) confirms an increase in corporal punishment between 1990 and 1997, even on girls on the palms of their hands, and yet teachers are not permitted to slap, kick or punch students. Where such excesses from teachers are practised and exacerbated by fellow students' bullying, it adds to further reluctance, and the school becomes a hostile environment.

It is also possible that the route to school is poor, in addition to students having to travel long distances, which places them under the constant threat of snakebite, abduction and rape; all of which discourage some parents (Kirk, 2008; Pereznieto et al, 2010). Manayiti (2014) confirms this by stating that, in most cases, school-going children walk very long distances of more than 4 km to fetch water to the nearest school, a situation that has proven to be retrogressive in learners' preparations for the future. Government prescribed a distance of 10 km and 7 km to the nearest secondary and primary school, respectively.

In addition to the distance factor, in a militarized state like Zimbabwe, the high numbers of security and fighting forces in any environment, as well as forced or voluntary recruitment into militias, creates an intimidating environment for girls and their families (Akpo, 2008). Militias in times of conflict are known for their violence, targeting females with impunity. The issue of schoolgirls' safety and security becomes of particular concern to parents in politically unstable and volatile environments with fighting forces (Kirk, 2008). The constant threat of attack and sexual violence lingers every day on the journey to/from school (Kirk, 2008).

Early marriage and motherhood also tend to mean the end of schooling opportunities for girls, with evidence that the risk of higher rates of early marriage and teenage pregnancy are particularly high in politically insecure environments (Kirk, 2008). Girls under fear of such violence perform below potential and avoid school in order to preserve their sexual purity, which is highly valued, as opposed to the social stigma and possible rejection by their families or community after their being sexually violated (Plan West Africa, 2004). Some parents fear for their daughters' security and, as a precautionary measure, the 6- to 10-year-old age group also stays home from school as the older ones drop out of school due to sexual violence and untimely pregnancy, according to Pereznieto et al, (2010). With evidence of the potential for sexual harassment established, some parents are influenced into never paying fees for younger daughters when their older sisters come home pregnant, which suggests that, indirectly, sexual violence in the school environment disadvantages girls out of school (Pereznieto et al, 2010). There also appears to be evidence of the risk of frustration with girls' socialization due to an expectation which tacitly encourages girls to remain within the confinement of the kitchen, where there is little freedom of expression over activities centred on serving other people (Runhare & Gordon, 2004), and this leaves girls with little time to pursue their own educational interests.

## 2.7 AT-RISKINESS AND SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMES

A comparison of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness between Third World countries and what is working in the First World may advise the best direction for Zimbabwean education. Available literature on efforts to minimize at-riskiness in Third World education is illustrated by Dass-Brailsford (2005), who acknowledges more use of role models in schools and community support for the disadvantaged but also notes that other communities showed evidence of jealousy, which is another form of exposure to at-riskiness. In Zimbabwe, and probably in most Third World secondary and higher education institutions, female role models are under-represented and effort is made to encourage enrolment. This is more so in the scientific, technical and vocational specializations, as confirmed by UNESCO (2014), who acknowledge the modest efforts being made. UNESCO states that the rate of female secondary teachers rose from 29 per cent in 1985 to approximately 32 per cent in the 1990s, and in technical-vocational institutions it increased by 39 per cent between 1990 and 1993. However, the numbers of male staff increased by 40 per cent, which means there are fewer female role models for at-risk female students in Zimbabwe. However, UNESCO (2014) is impressed by the modest increment in the number of women enrolling at the University of Zimbabwe, and this figure has been increasing over the years, which further underscores the task ahead if female aspirations are to be encouraged and sustained.

Grim as it might appear in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the Third World, evidence from the First World seems to suggest that it is not only the numbers that matter but the strategies and initiatives carried out by the available teachers that may also ameliorate the effects of disadvantage among the few females in schools to maximize their chances. For example, Snow (2005) is of the opinion that students need support to meet standards, participate effectively in society and succeed in life. Some of the suggested school-based strategies are whole-class instruction, cognitively-oriented instruction, small group tutoring, peer tutoring and computer-assisted instruction to assist low-achieving students (Snow, 2005). Dobebe, Gangemi, Kopanidis and Thomas (2013) concur with Snow and further suggest that special intervention programmes to alleviate the impact of at-riskiness should aim to effectively manage programme completion (articulation) through preventing continued poor performance, thereby minimizing risk of exclusion or ultimate withdrawal (attrition) from their studies. Further studies supporting this relationship between at-riskiness and support programmes have been conducted by Belloc

et al (2010), who concluded that, among other factors, financial pressure may influence students' withdrawing decisions.

Current research on at-riskiness in sub-Saharan Africa is dominated by the ongoing efforts to contain the HIV/AIDS spread, and there seems to be scant literature dealing with at-riskiness, as seems to be the case for Zimbabwe. Examples include Pascoe, Langhaug, Durawo, Woelk, Ferrand, Jaffar, Hayes and Cowan (2010), who looked at HIV riskiness among school-going young people and their required support. Similar studies on high schools and HIV/AIDS-related focus include Saito, Monasch, Keogh, Dhlembeu, Bergua and Mafico (2007). However, the above-mentioned needs and characteristics of at-risk students are confirmed by Runhare and Gordon (2004). They explain that the same disadvantages emanate from: family instability due to loss of parents because of death and divorce; poverty due to the inability by parents to raise school fees; lack of money for uniforms, books, pens/pencils and other costs associated with schooling; student abuse/beatings by step-parents and guardians; pregnancy; and drug abuse. This almost represents most of the possible problems relating to educational disadvantage, except for 'brain drain', which is the focus of a study by Mhishi, Bhukuvhani and Sana (2012) outlining solutions to educational disadvantage in Zimbabwe. The authors look at the efforts carried out for the improvement of teacher retention and effectiveness within remote districts through staff development programmes in the critical shortage subject areas of science.

UNESCO (2010), as well as a number of journalistic reports, also reiterates educational risk through decline in Zimbabwean education because of shortages of nearly all resources, including qualified teachers. This is also the view of Mavundutse, Munetsi, Mamvuto, Mavhunga, Kangai and Gatsi (2012). They list additional problems, among which are: poor accessibility; poor infrastructure; poor facilities; lack of teaching/learning materials, as in books; lack of trained teachers; and lack of financial resources for the provision of quality education in certain geographical areas of Zimbabwe, such as resettlement areas where educational access for the newly resettled farmers appears to have been in crisis since farm invasions began in 2000 (Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation [CCMT] 2014).

Teacher shortages in some regions, such as northern Mt Darwin, lack gender training and adequate understanding of gender issues because the teachers are largely untrained (Runhare & Gordon, 2004). Science subjects are likely to be a long-term problem, not only for Zimbabwe but for all developing countries, according to UNESCO (2010). The HIV/AIDS-related teacher

attrition and out-of-profession teacher migration (UNESCO 2010) is exacerbated partly by the adoption of ESAP (Chikanda, 2007), which has since caused huge resignations from the Zimbabwean teaching service. As many as 15,200 teachers were said to have migrated to neighbouring states, such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland, since the beginning of 2007 (IRIN, 2007), and that number is now said to have soared to an estimated 30,000 (Save the Children Alliance, 2009).

The reasons for teacher resignations are not limited to salaries alone; they appear to also include the direct effects of general school insecurities attributed to sporadic attacks (Pswarayi & Reeler, 2012) on teachers and the closure of schools, which peaked in 2008 in most rural schools as teachers fled from rural areas where they were soft targets from militias for confirmed non-affiliation to ZANU PF, which could provoke McCarthyist allegations. The authors add that this violence explains why some schools had very low pass rates in public examinations. The effects were so severe that, in 2008, the teaching sector almost collapsed as most of the primary and secondary school teachers responded to these adversities, compounded by income-eroding hyper-inflation, by joining the diaspora from Zimbabwe's burgeoning speculative informal economy (Chagonda, 2012).

Teacher disenchantment still appears to prevail with disadvantageous effects on students. Hence, initiatives such as the staff development programmes conducted in Mashonaland Central at Bindura University. This project aims to redress teacher shortages through upskilling hired unqualified teachers for nearly all subjects, including Mathematics and Science. It has been confirmed that there are schools where there are no qualified teachers at all, particularly in provinces such as Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland North and the Midlands (Majongwe, 2010). This suggests that the teacher training initiative launched in 2010, taking the form of an open distance learning programme, has become a boost for further training towards accredited certificates, diplomas and degrees. However, the challenges faced by this programme include the shortage of resources for practical work: stationery, reading material and furniture (Mhishi et al, 2012). This leaves the quality of staff training questionable because critics want to know to what extent graduates of the programme are competently equipped with the requisite classroom skills. However, in this difficult situation it is appreciated that the programme does indeed give untrained teachers a taste of some training, without which their classroom effectiveness leaves a lot to be desired.

### **2.7.1 Redressing School Resources Shortages**

Anecdotal reports suggest that, in general, Zimbabwean education has been constrained by dire shortages of resources, such as textbooks. The main reason for this is the government's withdrawal of its subsidy and handing over the role of school funding to SDAs, whose skills and creativity are certainly operational to the extent to which the community can afford levies. Disadvantaged students pay tuition fees through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) for orphans to access schooling in Zimbabwe (UNICEF, 2004). However, the disadvantage of this fund is that the children will need to qualify with some monetary payment for the extra incentives demanded by teachers and for uniforms that are mandatory (Komboni, 2010). This is why there was a call for more funding after the Zimbabwean Treasury allocated only ZWD15 million to assist 83,000 secondary school children against a targeted 250,000 children in a situation where the fund should actually benefit 1 million children (Tafirenyika, 2014). In the same report, the government hoped, with questionable planning, for further funding from donors such as UNICEF, which is evidence that the government expects other governments to fund its educational programmes indefinitely.

As a result of the above, the dire shortages of resources, including teachers, let alone experienced or specialist teachers, in some disadvantaged schools persuaded UNICEF to donate 13 million textbooks to 5,500 schools in addition to free exercise books throughout the country (IRIN, 2010). However, there is work to be done on every front in order to redress the effects of educational resources shortages. For example, Konyana and Konyana (2013) observed that most schools have received computers but are yet to benefit from them because of the lack of operating resources, including teachers. Redressing teacher shortages had originally been authorized by Policy Circular No. 5 (2009), which allowed schools to use between 10 and 15 per cent of their levy for teacher incentives. However, this was criticized because it still did not address teacher needs in disadvantaged schools that could not match the competition from more endowed urban schools in attracting better qualified teachers. Through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Circular No. 6 of 2014, incentives for the retention of teachers were scrapped.

Therefore, it appears that the issue of teacher shortages persists with no solution in sight, with the government needing between 12,000 and 13,000 teachers across the country in 2012. Hence

the call by Murape (2012) for the government to reconsider its ban on the recruitment of temporary teachers in order to offset the shortage.

Meanwhile, efforts to include HIV/AIDS awareness continue at all schools as part of the Education Life Skills, Sexuality, HIV and AIDS Strategy, and some of these concepts are examinable where they are extended into the main examination syllabi. However, because of the continued economic challenges, decisions on redressing these challenges have not been very effective; probably because the government still does not seem to have the money to finance those decisions, such as providing teacher salaries to replace withdrawn incentives. No material changes are happening for most families and they therefore continue under the same, if not worse, socio-economic situations. Therefore, in a sense, it may be safe to postulate that more and more families are failing because very little is being done to turn around the socio-economic situations of families and, as a result, more and more children continue to be at risk of educational disadvantage.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed at-riskiness with specific examples from Zimbabwe and more broadly from the Third World in general, based on the available literature from both the Third World and the First World. This was done by introducing theoretical perspectives on at-riskiness before splitting the literature into economic, social, psychological and school-based evidence of at-riskiness. The chapter has provided examples of how the Zimbabwean community has been divided into the rich and the poor. Children from poor families have been incapacitated from attending school regularly and, as the economic problems continue to mount, more and more children have not been able to attend school when compared to previous years before the state's withdrawal of educational support.

Educational inequality in Zimbabwean secondary schools is more acute at the secondary school level, with children from the richest families more likely to attend secondary school than children from the poorest families. The new education policy has also increased the disparities between the rich and the poor (Khupe, 2010). Increasing economic challenges appear to have brought with them unemployment and disease, sometimes causing orphanhood among a significant section of the secondary school child population. Each category's factors were explored with a Zimbabwean emphasis or a Third World illustration and then contrasted against

the First World in order to illustrate how the issue is being dealt with in the First World in a bid to maintain the argument that ill-applied state policies seem to exacerbate the poor's chances for educational access through increased failure to secure educational resources for continued school attendance.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AT-RISKINESS IN THE ZIMBABWEAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the literature relating to Zimbabwean secondary schooling with special reference to at-riskiness. First, an overview of the legislation and structure of the Zimbabwean system of schooling is given. Thereafter, structural and policy elements that pertain to at-riskiness are discussed.

#### **3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ZIMBABWE**

Since independence, Zimbabwean legislation and policy have been motivated and crafted by a desire to correct past wrongs. At independence in 1980, the country deliberately adopted a mass-driven socialist education policy (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011) aimed at correcting a segregatory pre-independence education system which denied blacks equal educational access. To ensure mass access, the government implemented a number of revisions to the pre-independence education policy. While, officially, education was supposed to be run under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Education Act of 1979, there are many views which postulate that the ZANU PF Election Manifesto was indeed the de facto policy document guiding its operations up to 1987. The initial ten years were all about revisionism for massification on pre-independence policies. Government and communities built more schools and trained more teachers. The government declared tuition-free and compulsory primary education, like most states in Africa (Mapako & Mareva, 2013) but never really implemented it.

However, the fees were very low compared to what was demanded after 1991. Declaring free education was consistent with recognizing education as a fundamental human right necessary for Zimbabwe to redress past colonial imbalances (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). There also has been a repeated effort towards curriculum vocationalization since independence by introducing employment-related skills into the high-school-level curriculum. After the first ten years, government continued to maintain the two types of education characteristic of pre-independence educational legislation and policy, whose philosophy believes in class-based separate education. This appears to be further confirmed by the legislation decentralizing schools, which has increased at-riskiness for some sections of society. These decisions are

consistent with the definition of education policy stating viewing education as a formal, strategic educational decision-making process engaged in by the government to the more quotidian practice of problem definition and strategy making (explicit or tacit, viable or not) for educational problem resolutions (Levinson & Sutton, 2015). In practice, from 1980 to 1987, the nearest policy document to explain the source of what was going on in the Zimbabwean education system seems to be the ZANU PF 1980 Election Manifesto. The Education Act of 1987 has been followed by more revisions, some of which are the Secretary's minute circulars and directors' minutes.

### **3.2.1 Educational Legislation**

By Independence Day on 18 April 1980, education was still under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Education Act of 1979, characterized by a determination to uphold the provision of a superior education to all whites and very little (as well as inferior) education for all blacks. It is generally believed that the ZANU PF-led government chose to use its 1980 Election Manifesto, whose goal was the eradication of all class-based educational access for Zimbabweans. For that reason, government, in the absence of the new government's approved educational legislation, appears to have chosen, for some policies, to run education in terms of the 1980 Election Manifesto (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). It is probably a realistic conclusion to suggest that, for the purposes of addressing the immediate educational access aspirations of the poor, this manifesto was adopted as the de facto educational legislation up to 1987 by the enthusiastic educationist, Dzingai Mutumbuka, ZANU PF Secretary for Education and also the appointed Minister for Education. This phase is characterized by the policy of promoting growth with equity. The number of primary schools subsequently increased from 2,401 in 1979 to 4,234 in 1985 and to 4,549 in 1991, and enrolment totalled 819,586, 2,216,873 and 2,294,934 in the same years (Secretary's 1991 Annual Report). The mass-enrolled primary school student cohort into Year One in 1980 would certainly have been preparing to enrol at secondary school by 1987. However, by 1987, running the education system using an informal document appears to have become increasingly awkward. Chikoko (2008) suggests that the need for formal legislation was motivated by the growing need to decentralize some of the state's management functions to local authorities in order to ease the financial pressures caused by the social welfare state during the first few years of independence.

### **3.2.1.1 The Government of Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987**

The Education Act of 1987 (Government of Zimbabwe 1987) is the first post-independence government educational legislation and the most significant representing some of the ZANU PF 1980 Election Manifesto educational policies implemented after 1980 (Mafa & Nyathi, 2013). The main provisions of the Education Act of 1987 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987) were adopted in order to address the shortcomings of the Education Act of 1979 (Government of Rhodesia 1979), and this was done by adding Part 2, sections 4, 5 and 6, and in that order, these sections declared education as children's fundamental right, education was declared compulsory and that there would be minimum fees for education, which was supposed to be free at primary school level.

The first two sections addressed the shortcomings of the Education Act of 1979 (Government of Rhodesia 1979) but the implication of the Education Act of 1987 (Government of Zimbabwe 1987) is that it, ironically, confirmed the perpetuation of at-riskiness. This was so on the premise of some of the highlights of the Act (Government of Zimbabwe 1987). These include formalizing the policy of deracialization for the two formerly separate systems of education into a single non-racial system (Zvobgo, 2003). This meant the democratization of education through the introduction of cost-sharing with parents even though this potentially exposed children from disadvantaged families instantly into at-riskiness. It further declared education as a human right, which was not easily translated into action for lack of a supervision instrument. Educational access fees are a negation of equity if a government seeks to enforce fundamental and compulsory education (Humphreys & Crawford, 2014). This contradiction appears to be self-evident after the 1987 legislation. Subsequent Acts have only confirmed the education-after-fees-payment principle and so far, that appears to be working against vulnerable people.

### **3.2.1.2 The Government of Zimbabwe Education Act of 1991**

By 1991, changes to the Government of Zimbabwe Education Act of 1987 became necessary as the country faced a different socio-economic climate from the one existing since 1980. This necessitated the amendment of the Education Act of 1987 (No. 5/1987) by bringing it in line with the new socio-economic environment foreseen in the then proposed introduction of ESAP. According to Zimbabwe Framework (1990), ESAP required government to implement a

number of strategies to reform the economy (Zvobgo, 2003). This included reducing its deficit from 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 5 per cent by the fiscal year 1994–95 (Zimbabwe Framework, 1990). Government was further required to introduce trade liberalization in order to encourage investment inflow and also to deregularize trade and achieve increased domestic competition (Zvobgo, 2003). This provided entrepreneurs with the freedom necessary to respond to emerging marketing opportunities and pressures in all markets including education. Finally, government was expected by ESAP to reduce expenditure on social services like education through a cost-sharing arrangement with the beneficiaries (Zimbabwe Framework, 1990).

In practical terms, all educational institutions would institute cost-recovery measures in order to reduce the financial burden on government created by increasing costs. There would be no more free primary education in rural and urban schools (Zvobgo 2003). Furthermore, parents would be levied to supplement resources costs for various services offered by the schools. In addition, all non-core business of the school was to be subcontracted to the private sector: catering, cleaning, landscaping and security would no longer be the responsibility of the government (Zimbabwe Framework 1990). This meant that children in high-density area schools who were previously exempted now also paid fees (Zvobgo 2003). Even rural secondary school students were now expected to pay school fees despite the hardships faced by rural parents (Zvobgo 2003).

The main changes of the Government of Zimbabwe Education Act of 1991 (No. 26/1991) included the introduction of tuition fees at the primary school level, which left poor students at risk of failing to access education. If this law was born out of the possible fact that government simply did not have the money, then either way, the at-risk students were still exposed even without this law. This law confirms government's inability to finance education for all. Government policy position was now that schooling had to be paid for, according to Shizha and Kariwo (2011). Education became a paid-for product to be only accessed upon payment of fees by every consumer. Although government stipulated in its law that fees were to be paid according to family means, in practice even the poor still had to pay the market value, way above what they could freely offer if there had been a choice (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011). Shizha and Kariwo (2011) further note that Group A schools charged very high fees. This denied the poor's access into those schools. However, through those high fees, such schools were able to

improve their resources for an even better quality education as a result of better facilities and the recruitment of experienced and better educated teachers compared to the Group B schools.

ESAP compelled government to cut costs from education and asked parents to pay up. This was a total reversal of the principle of free and compulsory primary education enacted into law by the 1987 Act. It also reclassified schools as either government or non-government (Government of Zimbabwe, 1991). Education Statutory Instruments No. 87 of 1992 and No. 70 of 1993 were released for the implementation of this new policy. This Act introduced the formation of SDCs in non-governmental schools and, under Statutory Instrument No. 70 of 1993, SDAs in government schools. Both had similar mandates as they paved the way for the involvement of parents in the financial matters of schools (Mafa & Nyathi, 2013). The main aim of this statute was to try and involve parents in school boards, as had been practised in white-dominated community private and independent schools. Parents were formally made responsible for providing the educational finance which government had withdrawn. Government defended this move as an equalization of non-government schools on a par with government schools which had long enjoyed the support of school boards. The SDAs and SDCs were supposed to boost local resources (Zvobgo, 2004) and benefit schools through organizational efficiency and effectiveness. These instruments were silent on how poor and already marginalized communities would source the resources for SDA/SDC management. It is clear that resources need to be present first and, where they are scanty, there is nothing for the SDAs/SDCs to mobilize. This suggests that the at-risk communities were left holding on to a powerful instrument but without the financial capacity their education required as government 'weaned' them off with the abandonment of the ZANU PF 1980 Election Manifesto. Perhaps the only issue of significance is that the distinction between SDAs and SDCs indicated differences between government and non-government schools to emphasize that education was now offered differently with government approval in Zimbabwe between the rich and poor categories of school systems.

### **3.2.1.3 Statutory Instrument No. 87 of 1992 and Parent Bodies/School Governance**

Each school's local community of parents and/or guardians of children at the school is empowered and involved in running the affairs of the school through statutory instruments No. 87 (1992) and No. 70 (1993). These established school SDCs and SDAs as a cost-sharing arrangement with government.

SDCs and SDAs are corporate bodies which can be sued and which can also sue in their name (Government of Zimbabwe, 1992). They are mandated to achieve the following objectives for their school: i) to provide and assist in the operation and development of the school; ii) to advance the moral, cultural, physical and intellectual welfare of students at the school; iii) to promote the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future students, their parents and its teachers; and iv) to promote, improve and encourage the development and maintenance of the school (Govere, 1995; Government of Zimbabwe, 1992).

#### **3.2.1.4 Statutory Instrument No. 70 of 1993**

This instrument introduced SDAs in government schools but with the same roles as SDCs to implement the above functions, as defined by Statutory Instrument No. 87 of 1992. This is the statutory instrument that empowered communities under decentralization of the school governance system in Zimbabwe. Together with Statutory Instrument No. 87 of 1992, these two instruments authorized SDCs and SDAs to manage schools. They also decentralized the roles of recruitment and management of human resources, procurement of resources, resource management, financial management, maintenance, and school development in general, according to Kanyongo (2005).

Each community votes seven (and a maximum of eleven) members into an SDC/SDA for government schools, from among whom they elect a chairperson, a vice chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer, and co-opt the school head and the deputy head. Their mandate includes some of the following responsibilities:

- assist as far as is possible in the operation, extension and development of the school;
- assist in the preservation and maintenance of the property and facilities of the school;
- undertake the construction and installation of new buildings and facilities and carry out alterations, additions, improvements or repairs to existing buildings;
- change or impose a levy payable in respect of each child enrolled at the school;
- submit, on request, annual audited accounts of the association; and
- invest any of the funds of the SDA in such a manner as it considers advisable.

(Source: The Education Act of 1987, Statutory Instruments No. 87 1992 and No. 70 1993)

Along with the school head, their mandate is to: prioritize the needs of the school; maintain the school grounds and buildings; assess the number of books required; and manage the accessibility of BEAM for those who need assistance in a manner designed to balance the needs of the school and the capabilities of parents for quality learning (Harris, 2010). Each school works directly under the sixty-six District Education Offices, where there is a DEO, an Education Officer (EO) and a Human Resources Officer (HRO), who support SDCs and SDAs in communication with the Provincial Director, Subject Education Officers/ Inspectorate through to the Secretary for Education at Head Office. All teachers in government, church and council schools are employed by the Public Service Commissioner.

### **3.2.1.5 The Government of Zimbabwe Education Act of 2004**

The Education Act of 2004 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004) is the law currently governing Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools, and evolved from the preceding Acts. Under this Act, education is a fundamental human right (Part 2, section 4), compulsory at primary school level (Part 2, section 5) and declared a non-discrimination policy (Part 3, section 10). The Act (Part 2, section 7) states the functions of the Minister of Education and local authorities (Part 3, section 9), which is the classification of schools (Part 3, section 9) and upholding children's entitlement to enrolment in school (Part 3, section 10). The Secretary for Education oversees how non-government schools provide education. This splitting of schools by delegating some responsibilities from the Minister probably explains why this structure may associate some schools with what appears to be characteristic factors of at-riskiness, as elaborated on below.

## **3.3 STRUCTURE OF THE ZIMBABWEAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

The Zimbabwean education system is divided into two ministries: the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, which oversees technical colleges and universities; and the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, which administers education from pre-school up to A-Level. This study focuses on at-riskiness within secondary schools under the latter. Each ministry has its own Minister.

### **3.3.1 The Minister of Education**

For this ministry, the role of the Minister is detailed in the Education Act of 2004 (Part 2, section 7), with the objectives of promoting and enhancing the education of the people of Zimbabwe and the progressive development of institutions devoted to that purpose. The Minister does this by securing the provision of a varied, comprehensive and constantly developing educational service throughout Zimbabwe. Under the Education Act of 2004 (Part 3, section 9), the Minister classifies schools as either government schools or non-government schools or any such other categories as he/she may determine, based on the social and economic standards of the communities in which the schools concerned are situated. The Minister may amend or vary these categories. The Minister may also, under Part 4: establish, maintain and close government schools and hostels as he so wishes for educational purposes (including the accommodation of teachers); change the site of any government school or government hostel; and prescribe payable fees or additional fees for instruction in special subjects or special educational courses. Under Part 5, the Minister makes decisions on appeals from non-government schools by either ratifying or dismissing such appeals on registration of non-government schools, as decided upon by the Secretary for Education. If responsible authorities still feel aggrieved by the Minister's decision on their appeals, they may escalate the appeal to the High Court under Part 5, section 18.

### **3.3.2 The Secretary for Education**

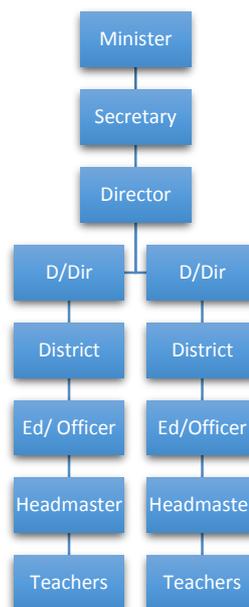
While all schools are under the Minister's authority, the Secretary for Education is the delegated custodian of government educational policy in the interest of the state on non-government schools and colleges for their provisional registration, cancellation or re-registration, in addition to some areas of administration in government schools on behalf of the Minister.

Under Part 4 of the Education Act of 2004, the Secretary, in consultation with the Minister and the Minister for Finance, prescribes payable fees at government schools and government hostels, and different fees at different government hostels. He/she also authorizes rebate or refund of the whole or part of the fees. The Secretary directs headmasters to refuse admission to any student with unpaid fees in terms of section 3. The Secretary also fixes the fees payable into the general purpose fund in government schools under section 3. There is no provision for

such a fund in non-government schools, and this is a significant difference in how at-riskiness may be experienced by different students.

Under Part 5, section 15 of the Education Act of 2004, the Secretary oversees the registration of non-government schools by any responsible authority. In processing the application under section 4, the Secretary examines the suitability of the school premises, hostels or other buildings relevant to the proposed instruction or accommodation of the students to attend the school. The Secretary will also want to be satisfied by factors of adequacy of purpose with regard to the numbers, ages and sex of the students, suitability of instruction by looking at the qualifications and experience of the proposed teachers, and proof of financial provision adequacy for any proposed school. If the Secretary is not satisfied, he may reject the application. In these non-government schools, under section 21 of the Education Act of 2004, fees or levies can only be charged or increased by no more than a prescribed percentage within twelve months, and exceptions will need the Secretary's approval. He/she needs to be satisfied that the increase is fair with regards to purpose, parental representation and relevant economic factors. If the Secretary declines, the responsible authority may appeal to the Minister.

The Secretary is based in Head Office at Ambassador House in Harare, and there are directors to run the nine educational provinces. Under these directors are deputy directors at provincial offices (Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2001). Diagrammatically, this hierarchy can be represented as follows:



**Figure 3.1: Education Personnel Hierarchy**

Educational provinces are further subdivided into districts under EOs with headmasters, headmistresses and teachers for each school on behalf of the Secretary for Education. The Secretary's recommendations are implemented at school level under the authority of the headmaster/mistress, who works with the SDAs and SDCs and his/her teachers on subjects offered and the available classroom space. He/she also decides on the number of students and teachers for the school, which should all reflect capacity to maintain excellent Secretary-approved standards of education. Schools under local councils, mines, private organizations, churches, individuals and responsible authority arrangements are organized in terms of the Education Act of 2004 (Part 5, section 15), and the Secretary represents government interest in these schools relating to funding (Part 2, section 6), staffing policies (Part 2, sections 55–61) and student enrolment (Part 3, section 10).

### **3.4 SCHOOL ENTRY**

Since independence, primary school education has been free, resulting in a dramatic increase in enrolment rates (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture 2001). Through the Education Act of 2004 (Chapter 25: 4), all children have the right to pre-school and primary education (Marist International Solidarity Foundation [FMSI] 2011). Government contribution to education represented 4.4 per cent of recurrent public expenditure in 1979/80, rising to 22.6 per cent by 1980 (Kanyongo, 2005). By 2001, the education vote had risen to 6.29 per cent of GDP from 1986/87, as confirmed by Dhliwayo (2001), and a per-capita grant pegged at ZWD30.44 per head in 2000.

Additionally, the government pays salaries, maintains infrastructure and controls the acquisition of furniture, textbooks, learning resources and the continuous upgrading of teachers. This socialist education policy saw the number of primary schools increase from 2,401 in 1979 to 4,504 in 1989, and the number of secondary schools increase from 177 in 1979 to 1,502 in 1989, with the total now standing at 5,625 primary schools and 2,312 secondary schools, in addition to a further 666 satellite schools attached to them in 2011 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012).

### 3.4.1 Early Childhood Education and Care

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) classes are the entry point into the formal Zimbabwean education system, which follows a 2-7-4-2-3 model (two years in pre-school, seven years in primary school, four years in secondary school for ZJC and O-Level, two years in high school for A-Level, and three years in university or teacher training). Figure 3.2 shows this structure.



University	3 years
A-Level	2 years
O-Level	4 years
ZJC	2 years
Junior	5 years
Infants	2 years
Pre-school	2 years

**Figure 3.2: Structure of the Zimbabwean Education System**

Through the Education Secretary's Circular No. 14 (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2004), further reinforced by the Education Secretary's Circular No. 2 (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2014), all children aged at least 4 have to attend either Early Childhood and Development (ECD) or ECEC centres, effective from January 2014. ECD/ECEC centres that operate outside primary schools are compelled by the Director's Circular No. 48 of 2007 to attach themselves to the nearest primary school within five kilometres. ECEC classes are governed under the Director's Circular No. 12 (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2005), which instructs all primary schools to provide space for ECEC classes. The registration process of these classes is controlled by the Principal Directors' Circular No. 26 (Zimbabwe

Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2011). This directs use of at least one room as a Zero Grade for pre-school education.

Pre-school education and ECECs are also run by individuals, organizations, local authorities and privately-owned organizations (Masuko, 2003). This education in rural areas remains free but parents are responsible for levies from which buildings, school facilities and sports are funded (Kanyongo, 2005). The Zero Grade prepares children for school through them staying in a school environment with qualified personnel and a professional administration (Mhangami, 2009).

Depending on the school and the age of the child, children may spend half a day or a full day at school. During that time, children are exposed to seven free play areas: an outdoor playground area; a building block area; a drama area; an art and craft area; a book area; a music and movement area; and a science and discovery area (UNESCO, 2011). This is entirely the responsibility of the local community that agrees the curriculum, with some awarding certificates of attendance in the final year (UNESCO, 2011).

After these first two years of ECEC, children enrol into Grade 1 to start an unimpeded 7-year primary education cycle. However, it is worth noting that the entry ages may vary, as determined by the distance to be covered to the nearest school; particularly so in rural areas, where transport facilities are not always convenient, and, as such, students tend, in practice, to be older compared to entry age in urban schools, according to Zhang's (2006) observation. He states that, during 2001, 20 to 40 per cent of children in Grade 1 were at least two years above the official age. Age and class level can be seen in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Age, Class Level and Curriculum**

Age	Phase		Curriculum
4–5	Zero Grade	Grade 1 Grade 2	Pre-formal activities in pre-reading, pre-maths and pre-writing for physical, social, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual development and health
6–13	Grades 1–7	Infant 1–2	English, Mathematics, content and home language
		Junior 3–7	
14	ZJC	Form 1	Eight subjects: English, Ndebele or Shona, History, Mathematics, Science, Geography, Bible Knowledge, and a practical subject, i.e. Agriculture, Food and Nutrition, Fashion and Fabrics, Metalwork, Woodwork and Technical Drawing
15		Form 2	
16	ZGCE	Form 3	At least five subjects, including Sciences: English Language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics with Chemistry, Physics, Integrated Science, Mathematics, English Literature, Religious Education, Geography, History, Commerce, Accounts, Economics, Computer Studies, Shona, Ndebele, French, German, Latin, Music, Art, Metalwork, Woodwork, Food and Nutrition, Agriculture, Technical Drawing, Fashion and Fabrics  Passes are graded as A, B and C, and fails graded as D, E and U (U being the worst)
17	O-Level	Form 4	
18	ZGCE	Form 5	Arts: English Literature, Geography, Shona/Ndebele Language and Literature, Divinity, History, French, Art, Music  Commercial: Management of Business, Economics, Accounts, Computer Science, Statistics  Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Further Mathematics  Passes are graded as A, B, C, D and E (E being the worst).
19	A-Level	Form 6	
19+	Tertiary	Training	Vocational colleges, polytechnics, technical colleges, universities

(Adapted from Chikutuma & Mawere, 2013; Mano, 2001)

### 3.4.2 Primary School

Primary school education starts with Grade 1, which is the first year of seven years of primary education (Chinowaita, 2014a). Schools are divided into two departments, with infants being

the first three years, then junior from Grade 4 to Grade 7. There is a formal national exit examination at Grade 7 from the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC).

Although the Grade 7 examination is an achievement exit point for candidates in Mathematics, English, content (general paper) and one home language, in practice, the quality of pass on a 1 to 9 scale (with 9 being the worst) is used to secure a place in some of the elite secondary schools only. Besides these examinations, entry is also secured through entrance tests, which provisionally secure places into Form 1 long before the students even sit the actual examination. Confirmation of a place is also guaranteed where students are consistent in their performance at both examinations. After the Grade 7 exit examination, one proceeds into secondary school.

### **3.4.3 Secondary School**

Secondary school education is divided into three phases: the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) (Forms 1 and 2); the Zimbabwe General Certificate in Education Ordinary Level (ZGCE O) (Forms 3 and 4); and the Zimbabwe General Certificate in Education (ZGCE A) (Forms 5 and 6).

#### **3.4.3.1 The General Certificate of Secondary Education**

The Zimbabwe primary school survival rate is only 68 per cent, with the transition rate being 58 per cent into secondary school (Mapako & Mareva, 2013). Most rural day secondary schools enrol all children who want to obtain a Form 1 place at the nearest secondary school within ten kilometres, but cases of longer distances are common and are said to force students to resort to what is called in popular parlance 'bush boarding' (Munjanganja & Machawira, 2014). This refers to makeshift, squatter-type dwellings, sometimes made by the students closer to their schools.

Zimbabwean secondary school education entails a four-year cycle starting at age 13 usually for entry into Form 1, which is the first of a two-year cycle. ZJC is a historical exit exam that used to be taken after the first two years of secondary education.

Teaching at ZJC level remains geared (as in the past) towards an examination, but this time for one prepared by the school. This means that currently there is unimpeded progress into a further

two-year GCSE O-Level course, which ends with an exit exam in one's second year. Students have continuous assessments from the first year of each phase in preparation for the public examination taken at the end of the second year of the ZGCE O and the ZGCE A.

The first of these two years is usually referred to as Form 3 and the last as Form 4, the last year in this four-year cycle, and ends with an exit exam of great significance for the candidates' future. A pass at O-Level is the normal qualification for entry into teacher training college, apprenticeship, technical college, agricultural college, polytechnic and nursing training college (Kanyongo, 2005) or to proceed into the last cycle of secondary education: GCE A-Level.

#### **3.4.3.2 The General Certificate of Education**

The General Certificate of Education entails a two-year cycle and is commonly called Advanced Level or GCE A-Level, Forms 5 and 6, or Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. Entry is restricted. It is dependent on academic merit or on set pass grades and overall performance in one's best passes. These passes are used as selection criteria by headmasters of schools that offer A-Levels. The candidate will have earlier indicated some tentative choice of their preferred A-Level schools and subject combinations. Headmasters select the best candidates based on actual O-Level passes and offer places for subject specializations to study at A-Level in preparation for university.

### **3.5 CURRICULUM**

Zimbabwean education, as observed by Georgescu, Mavhunga, Murimba and Stabback (2013), uses the curriculum to articulate knowledge, skills and attitudes in the context of intentional and organized programmes of study. The choice of content of the Zimbabwean curriculum, for both formal and informal education, is organized into learning areas and subjects, as well as through activities/tasks (such as project work) to achieve cross-cutting objectives and offer solutions to cross-cutting issues at age-appropriate phases with the entry, curriculum and exit public examinations from ZIMSEC sat in June and November.

The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, in collaboration with ZIMSEC, provides a curriculum for all schools from which ZIMSEC sets all national secondary school exit examinations. ZIMSEC was established through an Act of Parliament (Zimbabwe School Examinations Act of 1994). This Act formalized the localization of the examinations from Cambridge under a localization process, which commenced in 1994 and was completed in 2002, with final control of A-Level examinations being taken away from Cambridge. This weaning process from Cambridge into ZIMSEC was done gradually and overseen by Cambridge in order to ensure retention of examination standards. Besides the political appeal, there were fiscal considerations, confirmed by Kanyongo (2005) when he states that localization of the examinations cut costs by eliminating the need for foreign currency required to pay foreign examination administrators.

To ensure success, the Zimbabwe Division of Educational Services (formerly the Curriculum Development Unit [CDU]) was established with the responsibility of producing researched relevance in educational curricula content at both primary and secondary level (Musarurwa & Chimhenga, 2011) for examination by ZIMSEC. The ZIMSEC Act (Zimbabwe Government, 1994: 67) empowers ZIMSEC to approve subjects for examination and to confer certificates and diplomas at primary and secondary level. It also appoints panels or boards of examiners, approves and registers examination centres, and organizes and conducts examinations in subjects for primary and secondary education.

Zimbabwe accepts that its secondary school curriculum can never remain relevant and perfect for all ages as society changes (Munikwa, 2011; Shiundu & Omulando, 1992; Zvobgo, 1996) and, since independence, has attempted periodic reviews relating to relevance. This is done by using only one current syllabus per subject per year per level taught in preparation for the pending examination for all candidates. With the exception of some pre-schools, all educational levels follow the Ministry-prescribed curriculum from the CDU. This curriculum is authored by the CDU under the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, and ZIMSEC, in addition to teachers, subject EOs, teachers' associations, universities and civic groups. However, Musarurwa and Chimhenga (2011) are of the view that, since the initiation of the ESAP, CDU has not been effectively making much of a contribution, with curriculum tasks largely being left to ZIMSEC, and, in their opinion, ZIMSEC is much better placed for an objective selection of textbooks from the open market.

Since independence, it has been argued that the secondary school curriculum has largely failed to prepare learners for the world of work with its emphasis on academic subjects offering less relevance to the world of work (Pedzisai, Tsvere & Nkhonde, 2014). Since Nziramasanga's report (Nziramasanga, 1999), effort has been made for a two-pronged secondary school curriculum with strong technical/vocational and business/commercial components under the Two Pathway Education curriculum policy for all secondary schools (Director's Circular No. 9 of 2007). Ever since the 1990s, vocationalization has remained on the agenda but with no evidence of any success relating to improving Zimbabwe's mass unemployment, according to Dumbu (2014), Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005) and Shumba (2015). Besides, consideration has to be made relating to the degree to which disadvantaged schools can carry the burden of additional costly inputs required for a fully vocationalized high school curriculum. Disadvantaged schools already struggle to attract qualified teachers for basic subjects, such as Mathematics, English and Science (Mulken, Chapman, DeJaeghere & Leu, 2007; Shizha, 2013; Torubanda, 2014). This suggests that avoiding vocational subjects is not even a choice but a process which denies disadvantaged schools the joy of offering a fully-fledged vocationalization with the potential to make their graduates equipped for the job market. In the final analysis, the students attending those schools will never get the employment-creating exposure envisaged by this political rhetoric of vocationalization of the Zimbabwe curriculum.

### **3.6 EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

Since 1989, the secondary education system in Zimbabwe has been administered by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture. This ministry is responsible for education in all pre-schools and primary and secondary schools (or what is also known as Zero Grade up to Form 6/GCE A-Level) and the development of sport and culture (Chikutuma & Mawere, 2013). Higher education is administered by a different ministry.

The division of educational services translates government policy on primary and secondary education into measurable objectives, programmes and activities (UNESCO, 2011). Head Office makes major decisions and, to a lesser extent, under the policy of decentralization, the nine provincial Education Offices exercise limited autonomous power (UNESCO, 2011). The provinces are subdivided into education districts, which can promote certain grades of

employees. School heads can recruit and supervise teachers (UNESCO, 2011) and they work with their local communities with the SDCs in rural areas and the SDAs in former urban areas with regard to school funding activities. The head of each school is graded according to the substantive grade of each school. The lowest grade is Grade 3. A Grade 3 head is also equivalent to a Grade 2 deputy head. A Grade 2 head is equivalent to a Grade 1 deputy head from which Grade 1 heads are recruited. The school head is also responsible for student enrolment and discipline, which, according to Gumbo (2010), means that students may be suspended, excluded or expelled from school for misconduct, with the exception of girls who become pregnant. These, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, are transferred or readmitted after twelve months.

### **3.7 TEACHER/STUDENT RATIOS**

Educational access in Zimbabwe is dependent on positioning teachers as the main pillar of education, with teachers at the centre of all curricular and classroom organization. This follows a school term between 12 and 13 weeks in length for a year, which is 36 to 39 weeks long running from January to December, with class periods of 30 minutes at primary school level and 40 minutes at secondary school level (UNESCO 2001). To try and guarantee teacher effectiveness and efficiency of the school system, the following teacher/student ratios are recommended by the Ministry:

- Ordinary classes at primary school level: 1:40
- Special classes: 1:19
- Children with disabilities: 1:7
- Deaf and hearing impaired: 1:7
- Severely mentally handicapped: 1:10
- Blind, visually and physically handicapped: 1:10
- Forms 1 and 2: 33:1
- Forms 3 and 4: 30:1
- Forms 5 and 6: 20:1

(Adapted from Masuko, 2003: 17; Munjanganja & Machawira, 2014)

Deluca, Tramontano and Kett (2014) confirm that, while government has stipulated the above teacher/student ratios, in practice the average mainstream class totalled 37.8 with a range of 7 to 61.2.

### **3.8 PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

After primary school, there are two public examinations in Zimbabwe, and these are conducted and sat at O-Level and A-Level.

#### **3.8.1 GCSE Examinations**

According to the ZIMSEC Syllabus No. 1122, the aims of an O-Level examination in English Language are to: i) promote in students an awareness of English Language; ii) develop reading abilities and skills in English Language; and iii) provide the opportunity for students to obtain sufficient understanding and knowledge of English Language in order to pass in at least five O-Level subjects. English Language is required for entry into A-Level or training for most non-university programmes, such as the police, apprenticeships in various trades, agriculture, nursing, teacher training or any other out-of-school vocational courses.

A person's O-Level passes determines both the course at and quality of the college to which they can be accepted. For example, if a person has one or no O-Level pass, they will most likely enrol at vocational colleges such as Mupfure College for a foundation level certificate. Those with better passes may want to undertake an engineering course towards a higher national diploma or an apprenticeship at Harare Polytechnic. It is usually after passing GCSE that some people choose to become nurses or teachers. Teacher training is discussed in section 3.10 below.

Candidates need strong pass grades at this level, and these are graded on a scale of A, B, C, D, E and U, where A to C are the pass grades and A represents the strongest possible grade. This is illustrated in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: ZGCE O-Level Grading and Points**

Grade	
A	
B	
C	Lowest passing grade
D	
E	
U	

### **3.8.2 GCE examinations**

According to ZIMSEC Syllabus No. 9153, the A-Level examination in Literature in English serves to achieve the following: i) to develop/cultivate/encourage in students: an appreciation of, and an informed personal response to, Literature in English, in a variety of texts in different genres and from different historical periods and cultures; ii) the interdependent skills of reading, analysis and communication by showing the ability to understand and respond to explicit values and implicit attitudes and meanings in texts, describe and comment on form, structure and language in relation to meaning, and effectively and clearly convey their understanding of, response to and evaluation of literary texts; iii) an understanding of the nature and methods of literary study, demonstrating that literary works may be differently interpreted and valued; and iv) wider reading and an understanding of how it may contribute to personal development.

If a candidate wants to attend university, they are required to specialize in three subjects from one of the following three areas: Arts, Business or Science. ZGCE A-Levels are graded as A, B, C, D and E for pass grades, with F representing Fail, and O indicating that the candidate presented an O-Level standard of work. These grades are summarized in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: ZGCE A-Level Grading and Points**

Grade	Points
A	5
B	4
C	3
D	2
E	1 Lowest passing grade
O	O-Level pass standard of work at A-Level examination
U	

A-Level passes are considered for normal university entrance for a three-year bachelor's degree. A bachelor's degree is followed by a master's degree and a doctor of philosophy. Depending on the programme, the postgraduate programmes are normally two and three years, respectively.

Having an A-Level pass is an advantage for any of the vocations for which ZGCE O-Levels are the entry qualification. Meanwhile, some of these candidates may work as unqualified teachers in schools. Unqualified teachers were said to comprise 24 per cent of teachers in schools in 2010 (FMSI, 2011). Access into any future training programmes underscores the need for candidates to pass O-Level English Language and Mathematics and/or Science, dependent on the intended specialisation.

### **3.9 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION**

Dube and Ncube (2013) assert that in Zimbabwe, the policy on languages in education has not been fully addressed since independence. They observe that English remains the official language and that the change to the use of indigenous languages has not been boldly addressed by the small incremental changes to recognize other languages for the classroom. This starts with the Education Act of 1987 (Government of Zimbabwe, 1987) initiated language policy (Dube & Ncube, 2013), which addressed the country's linguistic diversity and acknowledged the potential for substantive bilingualism for students coming from indigenous language backgrounds (Muchenje, Goronga & Bondai 2013).

At independence, Zimbabwe continued to follow the 1962 recommended use of writing and reading in English as the language of instruction from the first day of Grade 1 by the Judges Commission, according to Ndamba (2010). English Language was the official medium of communication. It was the language for business over the main indigenous languages of Shona and Ndebele and other minority languages. Through the Education Act of 1987, government recommended the use of Shona and Ndebele as further mediums of instruction, especially in the early years of school life (Ndamba, 2008). The Education Act of 1987 makes these three languages equal, and to be taught from primary school, or as Ndebele and English or Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele and Shona, respectively. It needs be borne in mind that 80 per cent of Zimbabwe's population is Shona speaking. The policy further states that indigenous languages must be used in primary

school as the languages of instruction. In practice, all rural schools tend to use their indigenous languages while all urban schools tend to use English from primary school (Viriri & Viriri, 2014).

Under the Education Secretary's Circular No. 3 of 2002 (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2002) the following languages to be taught were added: Tonga, Kalanga, Sotho, Nambya and Shangaan (up to Grade 7 by 2005) (Muchenje et al, 2013). Furthermore, Nyanja is acknowledged as one of the languages to be taught at secondary school level, which makes it the fourth after English, Ndebele and Shona. This suggests a lot of work because both teachers and textbooks are needed; otherwise, students speaking these languages remain at risk of not accessing education in their own languages. As English, Shona and Ndebele remain the dominant languages of instruction, minority language speakers remain at risk of having to learn a new language and compete in national examinations with first speakers. That is an unfair education system.

### **3.10 TEACHER TRAINING AND TEACHER ACCREDITATION**

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education manages tertiary education for the production of competent, high-level manpower through the provision and accreditation of higher and tertiary educational programmes and tertiary institutions of higher learning. This includes all fourteen teacher training colleges and twelve universities (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2006). Zimbabwe has four secondary school teacher training colleges and ten primary school teacher training colleges, and these primary school teacher training colleges currently offer the ECD/ECEC Diploma in Education programme (Dozva & Dyanda, 2012). Unless it is a matter of choice, in general, the better a candidate's passes, the more likely they are to train at secondary school level. In general, teacher training is undertaken after successful completion of four years of secondary education (Dozva & Dyanda, 2012) and it takes three years to obtain a diploma as a qualified teacher at either primary or secondary school.

The Zimbabwean government ensures maintenance of standards on teaching, course instruction, examinations and academic qualifications in higher education, the establishment of private universities and university colleges, and a common student admissions procedure into higher education institutions.

All teacher training colleges are affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Teacher Education in the Faculty of Education under a scheme of association by which graduating trainee teachers receive their certificates or diplomas from the University of Zimbabwe (Gondo & Gondo, 2012). This diploma, according to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) Action Plan (2010), indicates that teachers' academic qualifications vary, but the required minimum qualification for primary and lower secondary school teachers is an Ordinary Level Certificate plus a teachers' diploma/certificate after three or four years of teacher training (Mukeredzi, 2013). The University of Zimbabwe's Faculty of Education monitors teacher training standards. Candidates may later (if they so wish) study for any degree but usually a bachelor's degree in education, at a university specializing in their main study from teacher training college. Studying for a university degree is optional but is becoming the trend now in order to improve self-confidence and professional growth. Furthermore, it increases one's chances for promotion into substantive posts of responsibility such as head of department or headmaster. An example is offered by Bindura University as an in-service degree course for Science teachers with diplomas or certificates in a science if they specialized in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Geography or Mathematics during their initial teacher training (Zezekwa, Mudau & Nkopodi, 2013). Paid study leave is almost always granted, or one can study using distance learning while at work.

Alternatively, one can choose to go to university first to study for a degree with 'enough teaching content.' This means that the majority of the degree modules must cover the subjects taught in schools, such as English Literature, Mathematics or Music. After gaining some experience, students can then return to university for further study towards a graduate diploma in teaching in order to become a qualified teacher and to enhance their chances for promotion (Zimbabwe Government Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, 2014). However, this is optional, and some people will continue to work as teachers, but, whether they choose to do so or not, the context in which teachers and headmasters offer their services appears to confirm at-riskiness, as outlined below.

### **3.11 AT-RISKINESS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF ZIMBABWE**

This section seeks to explore the literature critiquing this system in a bid to prove that the Zimbabwean education system has been malfunctioning for certain sections of society.

Government appears to have left some sections of society exposed to the vagaries of its ill-conceived economic policies, whose effect has been limited quality educational access to some. This is possibly the case because at-riskiness may be a construction of policies that limit the effectiveness of an otherwise idealized education system. The system outlined above appears to have denied equal participation in education for some children since 1992. Some students were denied equal access to educational opportunities and the freedom to do so, according to Sen (2005). It may be argued that government was instrumental in the denial of equal educational participation by all. If that is the case, then it may be concluded that this government owes the educationally at-risk groups an explanation as to why it deserves to remain in charge after adopting policies that denied these masses equality in the distribution of education (Sen, 2005). Education is a strategy for the development of personal capability, which is great for the national economic good. There is no justification whatsoever for a people's government to believe that certain sections of society should be exposed to at-riskiness; yet they are under what is supposed to be a people's government. An efficient secondary school education protects vulnerable groups, who also expect to benefit from socio-economic policies that minimize at-riskiness through the promotion of their educational access as a human right. This may probably be only possible when government either continuously sources and injects funds into education or alternatively enables families to obtain decent incomes that support and sustain educational participation, or government does both.

Concerned governments do so through the provision of infrastructural, human, material and administrative resources necessary to minimize at-riskiness among the vulnerable poor against economic downturn. It is the state's responsibility to implement pro-poor economic policies that reduce poverty and promote decent and productive employment that contributes to the eradication of at-riskiness (Manjengwa, 2012). Disadvantaged groups appear to have since received (if at all) compromised educational access continuously worsened by the capitalist ESAP-related changes after the policy shift from a mass-driven centralized education system into the market-driven and decentralized education access model.

There are confirmed risks in decentralization of education for the poor, as inferred by Von Braun and Grote (2000). Under decentralization, they see an increase in at-riskiness for some groups, which may be the case in Zimbabwe where the consequences of decentralization seem to include mismanagement of school budgets.

Some schools in the regions of Matabeleland, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West seem to be concerned by their schools' underdevelopment. The common understanding among ordinary people is that public resources are being captured by the elite. A feeling of mistrust has eroded public confidence because the poor feel excluded by local elite and a culture of corruption (Von Braun & Grote, 2000).

### **3.12 DECENTRALIZATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION AND AT-RISKINESS**

Decentralization of educational administration is defined by Litvack (Sa) as a process in which decision-making powers were transferred from the central Ministry of Education to intermediate governments, local governments, communities and schools. Although government claimed decentralization would empower communities, it might as well have been a strategy to evade financial responsibility. A critical look at Zimbabwean secondary education since 1990 and the effects of this decentralization policy for management and financing of secondary education appears to indicate some evidence of increasing exposure to educational at-riskiness in access for marginal groups. Disadvantaged Zimbabwean groups appear to sense a state of abandonment under decentralization. Von Braun and Grote (2000) suggest that unsuccessful decentralization policies should be followed by a call for compensation of the at-risk when they miss out on the initially purported benefits. This concern is confirmed by World Bank (World Bank, 2011) after observing that the negative effects of the Zimbabwe economic and political crisis are particularly strong in the education sector. This is all possibly because disadvantaged communities were not adequately prepared when the government handed down schools to local communities under its decentralization policy through Statutory Instrument No. 87 published in 1992 (Nyandoro, Mapfumo & Makoni, 2013; World Bank, 2011). That decentralization is pro-poor appears to be out of kilter with reality (Obeng-Odoom, 2010) as this policy does not appear to be working well for some schools. Not all communities were trained in school administration and therefore do not always have the capability for sustaining a vibrant educational provision at a time when decentralization without funding has reduced the capacity of the Ministry to plan, implement policies and monitor the education system as a whole.

There must be something disingenuous in the way in which decentralization of secondary education was marketed to the citizens. For the poor groups, accessing quality education has since been rife with at-riskiness when compared to the pre-decentralization period between

1980 and 1991. In the United Kingdom (UK), the US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the developed world from where the concept of decentralization was copied, communities have access to funds, and decentralization makes sense. However, Obeng-Odoom (2010) justifies decentralization in Africa on the basis that decisions are generated closer to the people who know their people and have local information about resources, the incomes of their citizens and local business conditions in their areas of jurisdiction. Furthermore, they can be influenced in their decisions/actions by local stakeholders and are accountable to their communities.

In applying the same rationale to Zimbabwe, the justification may hold until one looks at resource capacity among disadvantaged communities. For schools in these communities, decentralization is almost always about failure in poorer communities, as confirmed by Nyandoro et al (2013), who give examples of Tanzania and Kenya, where, due to poverty, lack of competence and experience in running schools, the policy has been a failure.

Decentralization is supposed to go beyond just community political participation. Political participation without resources to minimize at-riskiness is hollow. Decentralization in Zimbabwe is clearly about management of educational resources because that is what government talked about in selling the idea: management of resources at the point of need. Proponents of decentralization argued that the school and its programmes remained in touch with the wishes and needs of the local community with a self-determined pace, quantity and quality (Chisaka, 2003).

Educational access is supposed to be a resource-driven strategy if government aims to develop and sustain educational access in disadvantaged communities to ward off exposure to at-riskiness. However, government sincerity about equity right from the start of decentralization was questionable knowing fully well the educational resource generation limitations among disadvantaged communities. Disadvantaged schools have since been operating on minimal funding. This explains what seems to appear to be such schools' inability to prevent at-riskiness. They characteristically have high failure rates and are unable to maintain school facilities, which are degenerating into permanent states of disrepair. This is all because they are unable to meet maintenance costs and provide basic teaching resources and, even if they impose levies on students, the capacity to pay up remains impossible for disadvantaged parents in rural areas, for the unemployed or for those living on a minimum wage (Shizha & Kariwo, 2011: 40). Only with empowerment will such communities be able to make improved resource

mobilization, service provision and infrastructure (Obeng-Odoom, 2010) in the best interests of at-risk students. This is also the view of Gershberg and Winkler (2004: 342) when they postulate that decentralization is not enough without complementary empowering reform in order to enable parental committees to improve accountability of schools (Masuku, 2010). Empowering weak, poor communities may include enhancing their ability to generate their own resources through support of employment opportunities or loans for productive economic activities and training in resource management.

Therefore, it could not have been a serious proposal for decentralization that poor parents manage non-existent resources with non-existent skills. The Zimbabwean government must have been aware of these limitations for some sections of local communities. Hence, the critical view that decentralization is a convenient political excuse to simply make parents either pay for their children's education or keep their children at home. The evidence is confirmed by Nyandoro et al (2013), who postulate that educational development under the decentralization scheme has increased at-riskiness and has adversely affected educational access because of parents' extreme poverty and the lack of competence and experience in managing schools.

The real reasons behind decentralization have therefore been left to speculation because the government's own argument of empowerment is weakened by failures in educational access among the disadvantaged. Perhaps the actual reason for decentralization is presented by Nyandoro et al (2013), who observe that, actually, the government had simply run out of money and was unwilling to develop the education of the disadvantaged communities since it was not willing to keep up with the ever-increasing appetite for more schools. There can be merit in that argument. To start with, this is not the first educational policy default: government never implemented its self-declared education for all in secondary schools.

The pressures on the government are presented by Chikoko (2008) when he states that the government did not have the money required to expand educational provision and to meet the increasing expenditure for the huge education bills (salaries, allowances, transport services, students' grants, furniture and equipment, student loans, secondary schools, the payment of per capita grants for books and other stationery, and building materials).

### 3.12.1 SDC/SDA Corporate Governance

After commissioning of this policy, World Bank (2011) confirms limitations in educational access through poor planning, unimplemented policies and poor monitoring. The most important resource in a user-pays educational school model is probably the finance, followed by the skilled people to manage those finances. Van Wyk (2004) suggests a closer analysis of the issues weighing against implementation of sound decentralization in corporate governance, which can probably improve efficiency in schools if such a policy addresses:

- a lack of skilled and qualified staff;
- responsibilities not being clearly defined;
- a lack of training;
- a lack of structured policies and procedures;
- outdated accounting and information systems;
- inadequate control systems; and
- non-integration between budgets and strategies.

(Adapted from Van Wyk, 2004: 414)

It is not clear to what extent Zimbabwean schools are experiencing shortages in the above for some of their SDCs and SDAs, particularly essential financial skills and SDA training, or if schools are following sound corporate governance principles to prevent financial leakage.

What is known is that the initial programme of Zimbabwean decentralization was commissioned with just a two-day skills training session for the SDCs and SDAs, according to Chisaka (2003). Training could not be for longer due to the government's limited financial resources: not enough to cover more than the two-day initial training session meant for enabling these school administrators to acquire basic rudimentary skills and familiarity with their new roles. Chisaka (2003) adds that schools did not benefit for long because of the mandatory annual elections of such office bearers. It is unknown whether subsequent staff development followed the initial short-resourced training. If nothing changed, then decentralization of some schools has since been run up to now without adequately trained SDCs/SDAs, which probably suggests school budgetary at-riskiness. Besides, once launched, decentralization has operated with minimum supervision, as confirmed by Harris (2010) when he states that there was lack of

transparency and, due to staff shortage, the Ministry has not been auditing school accounts annually because it does not have enough vehicles for officers to conduct audits, therefore having to rely on the provincial EOs.

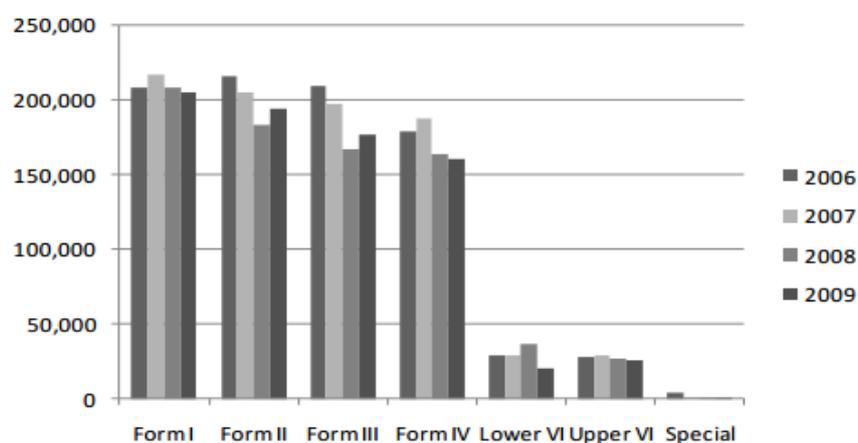
### **3.12.2 State Transfer of Risk/Abandonment of the Poor**

The above probably illustrates how social exclusion or at-riskiness in Zimbabwean secondary schools results from the government's various deprivations relating to the disadvantaged, who have been left with limited access or just minimally decent educational access (Sen, 2005). In one sense, the decentralization policy may be viewed as a transfer package of risk on to families through their likely incapacity to maintain and extend existing schools and the inability to raise the finance for the construction of new schools, which are roles that were handed over to the SDCs and SDAs (World Bank, 2011). The resultant scenario is that the capacity of each school to raise and manage finances under decentralization generally reflects the absence of wealth within the community which supports each school (Chisaka, 2003), and this is where it seems unfair to lose the previous state-provided educational access equity cover.

Besides the localized community financial limitations, further barriers to quality education are the shortage of teaching and learning materials, in addition to the fact that inflation continues to severely affect teachers' salaries, which have dropped significantly, leading to a norm of high teacher absenteeism. World Bank (2011) adds that infrastructure has been deteriorating and user fees have been increasing in order to compensate for budget cuts, but this is increasing at-riskiness for students from poorer households, whose dropout rates have been rising significantly. There is evidence of exorbitant levies such as desk fee deposits of as much as ZWD1,000, in addition to ZWD950 for school fees, according to Chinowaita (2014b). These prohibitive levies appear to be discriminatory and are in conflict with the equalization of educational access, and decentralization has exacerbated inequalities where they already existed (Chisaka, 2003). Government retained the wedge bill, a per student school grant and tuition grants to non-governmental schools for the purchase of books and learning materials. The idea of an equalizing grant needs to be appraised as a great initiative towards minimizing at-riskiness.

According to World Bank (2011), the grants are allocated based on the available government revenues rather than the actual cost and the market value of the pedagogic materials, and, therefore, this gesture may be criticized for its inadequacy or ineffectiveness in the educational financing of at-risk students in urban Group B schools. Worse still is the observation that only a small amount is disbursed, and usually with substantial delays. Furthermore, World Bank (2011) notes that rural schools, mainly under the jurisdiction of district councils, do not receive such equalizing grant assistance, which is a form of discrimination. This has since disadvantaged some groups to become educationally excluded in what Wang (2011) describes as either constitutive or instrumental acts by government. Making the gesture of the equalizing grant worse is the fact that even that grant has been gradually dwindling, giving rise to concerns about its potential effect in increasing at-riskiness and resulting in poor teacher salaries and low operational and teaching materials (World Bank, 2011). This has left those students from such schools exposed to increase at-riskiness, and the shrinking high school enrolment record shown in Table 3.6 is evidence of the impact of that, with approximately 50,000 students having dropped out of high school between Form I and Form IV.

**Table 3.6: Secondary Enrolment by Form and Year 2006–2009**



(Adapted from World Bank, 2011: 36)

The figures Table 3.6 indicate that, although nearly 200,000 students enrolled at Form 1 level, World Bank (2011) observes that, between 2001 and 2006, at-riskiness in secondary education saw enrolment decline to 46 per cent from 51 per cent from 888,000 students, whose total dropped further in 2009 to 783,000 (34 per cent). This decline is also confirmed to be worse among female students, among whom only 49 per cent attended secondary education. This drops further to only 35 per cent for upper secondary education, as confirmed by World Bank

(2011), which observed that 208,200 students enrolled in Form I in 2006 but only 160,400 stayed on to Form IV in 2009. This may be attributed to the interplay of both macro-micro economic factors. Students may have also failed to attend school, possibly due to the loss of family income through company closures, which can expose families to financial pressures, making them face difficult sacrifices by parents asking children to supplement family income by working instead of attending school (World Bank, 2011).

Further reasons for at-riskiness have been revealed in a Zimbabwean study by Mawere (2012), as shown in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: Details of the Records for Dropouts at Chadzamira Secondary School**

Details of the Records for Dropouts between January and July 2011 at  
Chadzamira Secondary School

Forms	Initial number of girls	Initial number of boys	Total number of boys and girls	Number of girl drop outs	Number of boy drop outs	Causes		
						Poverty/ Economic hardship	Pregnancy/ Marriage	Traditions/ Beliefs
1A	20	16	36	1	0	0	0	1
1B	22	22	44	2	0	1	1	0
2A	19	24	43	2	0	1	0	1
2B	26	13	39	2	2	1	2	1
3A	27	10	37	2	0	0	2	
3B	15	19	44	0	2	0	1	1
4A	25	19	44	2	1	1	2	0
4B	17	32	49	3	1	1	2	1
	<b>171</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

(Adapted from Mawere 2012: 8)

Mawere (2011) confirms a number of at-riskiness criteria consistent with the observation made by World Bank (2011). By gender analysis of Table 3.7, more girls than boys are at risk of dropping out of Zimbabwean secondary schools, and even more among the lower classes. The lower classes are also at a higher risk of dropping out due to pregnancy, tradition and poverty/economic hardship. Furthermore, pregnancy and marriage are a persistent risk for girls throughout their secondary education. From a socio-economic analysis then, there are more girls at risk due to poverty, preventing them from starting secondary education.

Mawere (2011) argues that the risk of dropout among girls has further implications deserving redress. He notes that dropouts are a waste of already underutilized invested money and an abandonment of the use of school resources, such as materials and resources in the form of

classrooms, which end up being not only underutilized but also having been installed at a cost. He also notes that this riskiness fails the victims, who will abandon their educational capacity or potential, which further denies their participation to fully contribute to the country's economy. Victims of at-riskiness then survive as liabilities to the country instead of being assets benefiting the country as useful resources (Mawere 2012). Mawere (2012) is also of the opinion that at-riskiness needs be challenged in all its forms, particularly traditions that put girls at risk of dropping out of secondary school.

While those at risk of dropout into marriage may be traced, World Bank (2011) states that the reasons for all the dropouts are not known and then postulates that some students may be joining informal educational institutions which seem to be offering better value for money. They note that the decline in education through reduced funding and financially demoralized teachers is causing some teachers to join forces with entrepreneurs and offer classes in learning outlets housed in converted churches, halls and private residences (World Bank, 2011). However, the greatest challenge to at-riskiness is the unethical practice, as confirmed in Zambia and possibly true in Zimbabwe, whereby teachers teach less in school and sometimes in makeshift schools in an unethical way, which Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) call 'work as you earn', whereby teachers invest very little professional energy in public schools. Teachers either come to work late, are absent (possibly due to searching for additional sources of income) or disrupt lessons through industrial action, which has been common in Zimbabwe since 1990, which also confirms dissatisfaction with pay and other conditions of service.

All of the above disadvantage students through low teacher time-on-task, according to (Ibid.). This has become so rampant in Zambia that it has been modified into an education model, whereby students have become an important source of income, raising concerns that teachers are engaging in income maximizing opportunistic behaviour through private tuition (Ibid). There is anecdotal evidence of similar fears of student exploitation in Zimbabwe by teachers who prefer to 'offer their best service under these informal circumstances'. Because of the informal system, participating teachers enjoy enhanced market power to negotiate for a better deal than what the government pays as a way of enticing more students into these informal private classes.

One way of dealing with the phenomenon of private classes may be by ensuring that teachers receive meaningful incentives from the government. There are policies in place that could be

copied, for example, in Kenya, where teachers receive an extra 20 per cent rural hardship allowance, and, in Nigeria, teachers receive an extra 15 per cent for teaching in riverine areas or in difficult terrain (Ibid.).

The Zimbabwe government scrapped the SDC/SDA-administered incentives to teachers in 2014, which has had potentially negative consequences for at-risk students, who may now have very unmotivated teachers. However, World Bank (2011) is cautious regarding the lack of verifiable data relating to the extent of this informal, private, alternative form of education but does propose that it is considered when explaining the net effect of decreasing enrolment in public schools, because the alternative form of education does appear to be a real attraction for both teachers and students. This form of educational access only adds to the potential for at-riskiness since the conditions under which students access education are not fully known. As a result, one is left worrying about the health and safety of those children learning in unregulated, backstreet makeshift classrooms.

### **3.13 AT-RISKINESS SCHOOL STRATIFICATION**

Right back to the beginning of Zimbabwean colonialism, education has always been classified according to some social class criteria. As previously mentioned, schools are currently classified as Group A, B and C, according to Shizha and Kariwo (2011). The classification system was retained after independence and was officially implemented through the Zimbabwean Education Act of 2001 which, despite several revisions, still retains what critics perceive as class identity mirroring the socio-economic backgrounds of the homes the children originate from. However, officially, this classification is said to connote not the family socio-economic status but is strictly about governance. In that sense then, the status of a rural government school, such as Nzvimbo Secondary School in Mazowe District and Prince Edward Government School in Harare, all fall into Group A as government schools. However, the same classification confirms ‘offloading’ others as Group B and C, non-government and falling under local councils, communities, churches and individuals. This suggests that government takes care of some schools and not others, with government further authorizing such schools to be run by local authorities, churches and individuals. These schools’ standards of administration and capabilities are not always as standardized as for government schools. Generally speaking, with the exception of elite schools, government schools are much better run than those coming under local education authorities, particularly council-run schools. On

the other hand, students are not always fully protected from becoming at risk of paying exorbitant fees and levies at these non-government schools. Government belongs to all its citizens but, with regard to educational access, government is guilty of cushioning some students and assuring them quality, affordable education while other students are left exposed to the risk of high and prohibitive fees and in some cases under-resourced, poor schools. Under Part III Article 9 of the Zimbabwean Education Act of 2001, Zimbabwean schools are classified as:

- i) government schools; or
- ii) non-government schools; or
- iii) in such other categories as the Minister may determine, taking into account the social and economic standards of the communities in which the schools concerned are situated (Government of Zimbabwe, 2001).

Zimbabwe has 1,797 secondary schools, with an average size of 436 students per school (World Bank, 2011). It still has to be asked why Zimbabweans do not simply have a single type of secondary school instead of different types of secondary schools, which, on closer analysis, highlights socio-economic differences among the same citizens. While the government removed class-based access everywhere else at independence, in education the authorities have yet to address the fact that an education that divides children into different classes defeats the declared philosophy of social equality. In fact, it actually fails to deliver on bridging educational class differences for genuine equality, all because of the pretended invisibility of segregation in educational access (Earick, 2010). This takes the form of student indoctrination by cherishing socio-economic meritocracy according to types of schools, which are an arranged matrix of domination by the politically wealthy class wielding the most power and privileges over the poor, the powerless and the underprivileged sons and daughters of workers (Earick, 2010). Schools are being used as the breeding grounds for social values, teaching children that they belong to a superior/inferior school. This does not help in bridging social class differences and establishing social class equality because the weak are, on a daily basis, continuously controlled by the dominant elite within the socio-cultural-political context of education.

During colonial times, the idea was for a racial philosophy which sought to promote Rhodesian whites as a superior race deserving a privileged position in Rhodesia through a class-based education system which reinforced the race differences of society. Hence, the African and

European or black and white education systems. Government had very little to do with African education, thanks to the generosity of missionaries who provided Africans with general and special education. Very limited resources went into African schools, while schools for white children received a lot more funding. With independence, Zimbabwean secondary schools have traditionally depended on funding from government. World Bank (2011) confirms that, in addition, schools receive student fees, levies and income-generating activities, in some cases from private or donor support.

World Bank (2011) also observes that, as of 2011, Zimbabwe was spending USD200 per secondary student compared to USD800 and USD1,000, respectively, spent in South Africa and other regional states. World Bank (2011) also adds that, by 2011, only 13 per cent of the sector budget was reserved for school examinations, transfers to private schools, teacher training and textbooks, and less than 4 per cent of the budget was spent on school infrastructure and rehabilitation.

Although the Zimbabwe War of Liberation was fought to rectify classism, even with independence the same concept of class-based school identification was extended from two (the white ‘haves’ and the black ‘have-nots’) into three classes: Groups A, B and C, which is representative of the actual class divisions within Zimbabwean society. This actually translates to the degree of at-riskiness on a continuum from Group A, whereby Group C faces the worst riskiness:

- Group A: High fee-paying, private and government schools located in European suburban areas to the east of Zimbabwean cities. Formerly attended by only white students and far superior in resources and trained teachers.
- Group B: Low fee-paying schools are located in former African townships in the west of every city. Have substandard infrastructure compared to Group A.
- Group C: Rural areas schools where the majority of Africans reside. Mainly non-fee-paying but parents are required to contribute building materials, school uniforms, books and stationery.

(Adapted from Shizha & Kariwo, 2011: 24)

In-between Groups A and B are private and missionary schools generally renowned for high fees pegged beyond the reach of the poor but usually achieving high pass rates.

Zimbabwean secondary school classification, as detailed above, symbolizes a secondary school educational stratification which only aids and abets the reproduction of social inequality and social exclusion (Tzanakis, 2011) of the at-risk children. There is a progressive deterioration of standards as one moves from the better endowed Group A in the city to Group C in rural areas. This creates the perception that it is a publicly-declared position by the state not to provide compensatory affirmative eradication of at-riskiness among Group C students. What is clear is that government has instead chosen to condone inequalities between Zimbabwean social classes, as defined by each group's socio-economic conditions, which the above classification/stratification is really all about. It is a relational set of inequalities with economic, social, political and ideological dimensions, which results in differences in the way children from Group C schools perceive and experience status, power or privilege (Dee, 2012). Educational classification or stratification as Group A, B and C schools has the effect of grooming children into becoming members of a society which accepts the inherent educational quality differences. They then carry these over from generation to generation; a reinforcement of inequality and beliefs about certain schools (Dee, 2012). Some schools are therefore known for their inability to prepare students for opportunities; only inequality, right into adult life.

There is therefore a sense in which classification or stratification may be said to be a form of negative groupism, reinforcing disadvantage, as confirmed among high school students in the Mazowe District in a study carried out by Matavire, Mpofu and Maveneka (2013), which relates to classroom-based ability stratification. The authors highlight the disadvantages, in that any form of student placement into strata is at the detriment of the less favoured because of the resultant attitudes and stereotyping that tends to promote the portrayed image of the better groups in a process which increases at-riskiness of the less favoured groups. Their conclusion is that streaming is not beneficial to students because the benefits to at-risk students are more imaginary than real. Matavire et al (2013) postulate that student streaming of students in the Mazowe District, which is a form of stratification or classism in the current study, is not only limited to students but extends to the distribution of resources: the unequal distribution of textbooks to the advantage of high-ability classes, awarding favourable learning conditions and allocating more competent teachers to them. Any deliberate unequal distribution of resources is considered as a detrimental philosophy to the educational access of the disadvantaged and is a recipe for at-riskiness. Matavire et al (2013) note that this disadvantage goes beyond this in that more competent, qualified and experienced teachers are allocated to high-ability classes

and in a way in which the attitudes of these students towards teachers of the low-ability classes become negative.

It is not far-fetched to argue that, by the same token, better resources are allocated to, if not reserved for, the better Group A and B schools. Thus, students placed in a better class, like their school, have better access to resources, and students placed in a worse class or school are at risk of less access to resources. Similar inferences are confirmed in another Group C school elsewhere in Zimbabwe by Campbell, Andersen, Mutsikawa, Pufall, Skovdal, Madanhire, Nyamukapa and Gregson (2014), who state that the same tendency of further withholding of resources from disadvantaged groups at rural schools introduced at-riskiness through four key disadvantages: i) there are fewer facilities at these schools and they lack phones, powerlines and piped water; ii) there are higher student-teacher ratios, with teachers being paid less than their small-town counterparts; iii) there are fewer formal preventive HIV-related activities such as an AIDS policy, teachers had no AIDS training, students did not have after-school AIDS clubs and lacked AIDS peer education used in teaching, and iv) they did not admit any child who was unable to pay school fees. These are all factors of at-riskiness.

This same treatment of increasing at-riskiness for disadvantaged students by authorities appears to be replicated with staffing policies. Matavire et al (2013) observe that teachers for the lowest class are rated lower and are placed in the same category with their low-ability students. Rather than being rewarded for teaching Group C students, perhaps the most distorted perception of Zimbabwean teachers of at-risk students is presented by Ncube (2014), who quotes various sources that state that the standard of teaching in public secondary schools is characterized by lazy teachers, increasing absenteeism among teachers, the generally poor quality of tuition, teachers' strikes over salaries and poor working conditions. It is not clear why Ncube's (2014) sources would state that Zimbabwean public school teachers are lazy.

These statements which denigrate teachers, in addition to the classification/segregation of both teachers and students, consequently create antagonism among different groups of teachers of different streams (Matavire et al, 2013). Antagonism and tensions are disadvantageous for students.

Lamprooning teachers is not the only disadvantage in these schools. The authors add that segregation and favouritism also by the same teachers, which they base on homogenous

groupings, is rampant and disadvantageous through ignoring students' feelings. This actually relegates their future to low-ability groups and can trigger self-fulfilling stereotyping as failures because of such treatment. Students develop negative attitudinal complexes that are associated with feelings of rejection, confining low-ability groups to low socio-economic status and becoming labelled and discriminated against (Matavire, Mukavhi & Sana, 2012). This does not promote the aspirations and interests of the at-risk students but instead reinforces low aspirations and negative social values, which can pervade all their experiences in life, including yearned-for occupations and social status. At the same time, too little education, unequal access to education and the wrong type of education can make societies more prone to conflict (ADEA, 2012). This is more so as a result of their possible low examination passes, poor job choice and emotionally feeling driven by poverty and dreams rather than reality (Matavire et al, 2013).

### **3.14 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, CLASSISM AND AT-RISKINESS**

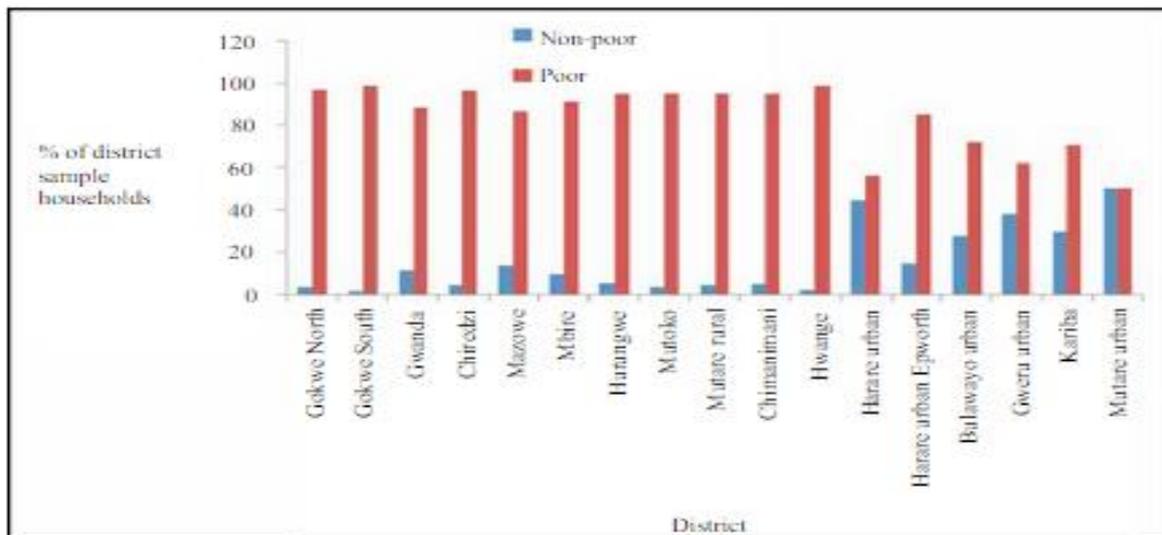
Geographical location can also create at-riskiness in Zimbabwean secondary schools. The rich, with their abundant educational resources, and the poor, facing educational at-riskiness, are generally divided between rural and urban schools. Further, there is uneven development in education among regions, which closely reflects the capacity of the available funding that each SDC/SDA can generate for its school.

The regional capacity of a school to generate enough resources may create political tension in the Zimbabwean regions and schools if they have significantly different income levels and resources. This fact is probably not fully addressed by the policy of decentralization (Von Braun & Grote, 2000).

Students from poor regions could avoid at-riskiness by avoiding poorly resourced schools within their deprived neighbourhoods and access a better education in different areas from where they reside. However, this tendency to cross over into a better geographical location is frustrated by the reality that the privileged schools insulate themselves from such possible invasion by exercising a school zoning enrolment policy, which reserves the first right to enrol by virtue of one's residential address. This may be criticized as resembling some form of educational regional discrimination against those students from poorly-resourced schools who are simply seeking to exercise their right to a good education offering better future opportunities. In general, all Group A schools are urban and Group C schools are rural, which

is consistent with the general geographical zoning of poverty among households, as shown in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8: Incidences of Household Poverty by District**



(Adapted from Manjengwa, 2012: 32)

The characteristic of household poverty, as confirmed by Manjengwa (2012) above, is certainly seen in rural settings. There is a high dependency ratio. No one is in permanent formal employment and households have a female head. Such households receive no migrant remittances or cash transfers and the head of the household is most likely to be older than 49 years with less than 13 years of education. Such households are not likely to be able to make meaningful contributions to the development of their schools. This suggests that the more prosperous schools, which are generally situated in urban areas, certainly appear to benefit from the economic endowment enjoyed from development of their geographical location (Wang, 2011).

Some geographical locations are much more generous in supporting educational access and eliminating at-riskiness (Wang, 2011). There is a clear pattern of financial geographical character illustrating at-riskiness through the material differences between urban, rural, mining and resettlement geographical areas. For example, the building of classrooms at Kubatana Secondary School at a mining location under the ZISCO mining company is carried out by the mining company itself. Rural council schools which depend on the village for the necessary

resources are not always economically well-endowed to compete against ZISCO or urban centre schools in raising funding for school construction and maintenance.

Mission schools, such as Mazowe Secondary School, which can easily adjust fees upwards, have a great advantage over rural day schools, such as Mamini Secondary School in the Kachuta communal lands in the Zambezi valley of Guruve.

Most financially-able parents send their children to boarding schools, be they government or private, as the first option, then day schools (World Bank, 2011). The deteriorating socio-economic situation and its perceived increased educational at-riskiness appears to have persuaded parents to opt for private education. However, the fact that only 6 per cent of secondary school students were attending private schools in 2007, up from 4 per cent in 2001, illustrates how non affordable quality education is in Zimbabwe. The fact that geographical location is a factor in influencing perceived educational at-riskiness may be confirmed by the fact that the number of private schools in Harare increased from 6 per cent to 10 per cent between 2001 and 2007, followed by Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, the Midlands and Matabeleland South. While it may be generally accepted that day schools are supposed to be cheaper, their location has cost implications on the potential for the challenge of at-riskiness.

This correlation between geographical location and school geographical location relationship to educational at-riskiness and funding potential may explain why the priorities between schools differ so much. Some fundraise for trips overseas as others struggle to raise levies for basics, such as classrooms, furniture and attracting qualified/experienced staff. This relationship further appears to have far-reaching implications when it comes to at-riskiness among those remote rural schools and urban poor areas. Even rural growth point schools are more attractive to remote day schools and therefore can command an advantage over the pegging of more fees, which can limit access by some students from poorer backgrounds. Wang (2011) observes that urban households have higher income compared to that of rural households, and that the socio-economic dynamic is reflected in better educational access: those with money experience less educational at-riskiness. Furthermore, the existence of these better social facilities in urban areas attracts people into moving to cities where they have the choice, especially when educated and seeking a better life. This skilled migration into the better regions reinforces the educational at-riskiness in rural areas (Wang, 2011). There may be two reasons why this is the case: i) those who have the financial means move out of less attractive

areas; and ii) urban areas become centres for the financially better endowed, leaving the financially weak in some geographical areas at risk of struggle in terms of quality and opportunity for further study (Bao, 2006).

In that respect, nearly all urban schools are better in terms of quality of buildings, teachers and curriculum compared to nearly all rural schools. This is because urban residents, in general, enjoy a clear advantage of income, social services and social security (Wang, 2011). This is confirmed by Muzvidziwa (2014), who quotes Chikomba (1988) on the lack of resources in new rural schools, which, during his time, operated under trees or under the blazing sun, with constant disturbance from torrential rain in rural areas; a situation perhaps still posing at-riskiness in resettlement and rural areas long after Zimbabwean independence.

In addition to the three types of schools, there are students attending satellite schools/classes established following the Land Reform Programme of 2000 to cater for children who moved with their parents from established areas to resettlement areas (World Bank, 2011). In a related study, Chinyoka (2014) highlights the level of at-riskiness in new satellite schools located in resettlement areas. This is corroborated by Chitaka (2012), who confirms educational at-riskiness in satellite schools which present so much risk that at best those schools demonstrate pass rates ranging from 0 per cent to 10 per cent, with some schools not even qualifying as examination centres.

Chitaka (2012) only presents a snapshot of the at-riskiness situation without explaining the link to poverty. The actual disadvantage of attending such schools is presented by Barton (2003), who mentions that schools with high percentages of students in poverty tend to implement a less rigorous curriculum and have fewer experienced and certified teachers (Barton 2003). Zvavahera (2014) concurs with this and elaborates on what could likewise concur with Chitaka (2012) and Barton's (2003) arguments by confirming disadvantages that contribute to Group C at-riskiness. If, by a rigorous curriculum, Barton (2003) means a wider range of subjects, then it may be difficult for some disadvantaged schools to compete fairly to attract teachers who may also be in demand in the better class of school. After all, it is only rational to think that the teachers themselves would want to be associated with status-enhancing schools. Zvavahera (2014) notes that these schools disadvantage students through them being shunned by teachers.

Zvavahera (2014) also suggests that some students are exposed to the risk of a lack of quality teaching because some teachers are more attracted to certain schools only, which creates artificial teacher shortages in the shunned schools. Generally, teachers in Group C schools/rural areas are concerned with the quality of personal accommodation and classroom facilities. These schools are characterized by a lack of teaching resources and a dearth of leisure activities, which are either poor or non-existent (Zvavahera, 2014). These circumstances prevailing at such schools may be behind the reason why so many teachers are poorly motivated because their basic needs for food, housing and security are not always met. This is best explained in terms of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory. Lack of teacher motivation to deliver exciting lessons and improve educational quality is itself at risk of being non-existent. It depends on higher-order needs only succeeding after adequate satisfaction of each teacher's basic needs (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). According to Maphosa, Bhebhe and Shumba (2014), accommodation and its quality are also confirmed as important considerations in teacher availability in their study establishing that teachers' choice of schools is influenced by the availability of decent and safe accommodation as well as the availability of electricity, which enables them to use electric gadgets in order to make their lives easier. Such facilities for some schools come at great cost, if at all. This suggests that teachers will resist any deployment to schools that do not provide ideal accommodation and further amenities, such as water, health care and public transport (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). This is the case for most Group C schools, and may explain why rural schools have trouble recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced teachers in order to minimize at-riskiness through the shortage of such teachers.

### **3.15 CURRICULUM AND AT-RISKINESS**

The curriculum, in all its representations, has posed major challenges for teachers of at-risk students in the Zimbabwean education system. Teachers, who are the best people to implement a curriculum for the success of any learning, appear concerned. Mandoga, Matswetu and Mhishi (2013) note that as many as 70 per cent of teachers in their survey were concerned by technological disparities between Group A and B schools compared to Group C schools. That same disparity is likely to limit how far teachers can go with their curriculum in terms of range and depth if there is a requirement for electricity or computers, as confirmed by Mandoga et al (2013). In their study, they highlight the disadvantages for some schools in areas without television coverage (which is limited to major urban centres where electricity is available), thereby restricting some schools from participating in Internet Computer Technology (ICT)

because most rural schools are not connected to electrical power supplies and, in some cases, do not have any buildings to house the computers (Mandoga et al 2013). Isaacs (2007) concurs by listing limited human resource capacity and fiscal resources as the limiting factors in the introduction of ICT in rural schools. This means that students from these schools are at risk of unfair competition from urban-educated students when ICT skills are required for future employment.

A limited curriculum may also be a result of limited resources within the school, which may also turn away teachers and further limit the curriculum choices a student may access. Both the human resource and curriculum components of this argument are further discussed by Machingambi (2012). In his study, he argues that, where the school curriculum is perceived as being not inclusive, it runs the risk of being labelled elitist and exclusive with the concomitant effect that many students may feel alienated. Such alienation can be a strong predictor of the risk of a student dropping out. He then argues for curriculum diversification, pointing out that such diversification is dependent on the willingness of staff to stay in any school, which is not always the case. Some subjects are so specialized that their teachers are not easily secured for a rural school when there is a competing opening in an urban school. Hence, the conclusion that, 'subjects like Music, Woodwork, Physical Education and Art are not offered in our school due to limited staff, funds and resources', by a headmaster in Machingambi's study (2012). Machingambi (2012) concludes that the limitations of the curriculum are a further risk in that students can easily lose interest and drop out when a curriculum does not achieve a closer cultural and contextual match between home and school.

In addition to the curriculum issues, in some rural areas teachers struggle with social isolation and insecurity. Zvavahera (2014) notes that teachers in rural schools further experience poor accommodation, in addition to personal safety issues and challenging conditions. With regards to social isolation and professional isolation, Mapuranga and Nyakudzuka (2014) confirm in their study that all teachers state that they want to enjoy the social amenities elsewhere from their current schools; a fact which presents the risk of teacher shortages. Teacher shortage is an educational at-riskiness factor.

### **3.16 TEACHER HEALTH AND SAFETY CHOICES AND STUDENT AT-RISKINESS**

At a personal level, teachers have an element of safety in urban areas compared to some rural areas, as confirmed by Amnesty International (2009), who state that many teachers are targeted for torture and ill-treatment, with neither investigation nor anyone being brought to justice, particularly for those working in rural schools. As a result, this makes teachers vulnerable to political persecution, particularly during election times, and teacher safety has not been guaranteed in Zimbabwe since 2000. This is further confirmed by Mapuranga and Nyakudzuka (2014), in whose study 65 per cent of teachers confirmed deciding to seek transfer because of hostility from the local community.

Teachers need personal/professional space, as in accommodation and classroom. Inadequacy in either or both makes some schools less attractive. This is exacerbated by the lack of both monetary and non-monetary incentives, which could go a long way towards addressing the plight of rural schoolteachers (Zvavahera, 2014). It is not clear why Zvavahera (2014) claims that incentives have not been empirically proven to substantiate the claim that they cause some teachers to want to move from some schools. Comfortable or adequate accommodation appears to have long been a great attraction among the considerations for teachers' decisions to stay or move on. In addition, teachers also face challenges relating to lack of clean water and food supply.

According to Todaro's Migration Model, professionals migrate for both economic and individual reasons, and this does not suggest in any way that the issue of incentives is not pertinent in the eyes of Zimbabwean teachers at Group C schools.

Like anyone else, teachers are equally sensitive to any form of dehumanization and the inhumane working conditions associated with certain geographical disadvantages, mirroring the societal classism that keeps some of their students in poverty (Payne, 2001). This includes life-destroying poverty in some geographical areas as well as distressing political violence to which Zimbabwean teachers have often been subjected since 2000 (Shutte, 2009).

ESAP is often related to Zimbabwean inflation. Although inflation is now under control, teachers still struggled to feed their families on limited available basic commodities, such as

salt and sugar, which were sold at hugely inflated prices up to 2008. On low wages, life was a struggle with the cost of living, resulting in monthly wages being spent immediately before the cash became worthless, Landes (2003). Teachers' salaries had dwindled from the early 1990s (Karoly, 2001) and yet, in some cases, they had more than their recommended class size (Barton 2003). Furthermore, in rural council schools, the schools do not receive government funding (Carey, 2005) compared to urban schools. In a study carried out by Chinyoka (2014), these factors constitute at-riskiness through the lack of educational resources at the affected schools. This study echoes Chikomba (1988). Chinyoka (2014) postulates that among the factors of at-riskiness in resettlement areas causing poor grades and a high dropout rate are the absence of proper buildings and having to rely on makeshift classrooms in tobacco barns, disused mine buildings, old chicken runs and pole and dagga huts, which are unsuitable for learning and human habitation.

The economic failures since the 2000 land invasions have not alleviated the educational at-riskiness that students in resettlement areas now face, as in most rural area schools. Confirmed barriers to school attendance include lack of books, lack of school uniforms, the absence of teachers and problems paying school levies, according to Manjengwa (2012). Levies are also confirmed as being contentious by Harris (2010) when he states that parents argue that they are under stress with many financial commitments, such as the payment of bills in addition to numerous levies (sport levy, library levy, grounds levy and 'civvies' levy), and these levies tend to be every two weeks. The so-called 'choice', whereby students either attend expensive private, church-affiliated government boarding schools or the cheaper day schools (Isaacs 2007), does not really mean freedom of choice since it is choice limited by financial incapacity.

### **3.17 CONCLUSION**

The stratification of the Zimbabwean education system into school 'groupism' seems to be worsening the chances for educational access for the poor. There is evidence of the disadvantages and at-riskiness in an education system that serves the same society differently. Some students are put in desperate situations with potential for exploitation without guarantee of completion of high school education successfully. This divisive approach towards Zimbabwean educational access is worsening the disadvantages for at-risk students, who do not benefit at all from their nearly government-abandoned, resource-starved schools and

demotivated teachers since the implementation of the decentralization of some schools into the hands of un/semi-trained SDCs/SDAs as custodians of secondary school education.

Government must become a custodian of Zimbabwe's education for all and do so by guaranteeing much needed equalizing resources. As long as government abandons a section of the population to struggle with education on their own, at-riskiness will continue to haunt a greater percentage of the population who cannot afford to access quality Zimbabwean education. They will continue to either drop out on the way or fail completely.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, I present the research design for the study on *the experiences of a selected group of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe*. The chapter commences with a description of the methodology and research design. This is followed by a description of the procedures undertaken during the study: sampling, data collection, data analysis, strategies to address credibility of data and ethical considerations.

#### **4.2 METHODOLOGY**

Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013) define methodology as a systematic way to solve a problem. They elaborate on this by stating that methodology is how research is to be carried out or the procedures by which a researcher goes about their work of describing and explaining and the means by which knowledge about the phenomena may be gained. Methodology therefore provides the work plan of a research through a logical and systematic search for new and useful information.

In order to obtain useful information about at-riskiness, I used the critical postmodernism perspective, which, in the view of Gutstein (2009; 2010) critically views education policies, capitalism, income inequalities and the persistent inequities of educational opportunities in general to explain educational disadvantages and at-riskiness. This also concurs with Eisner's (1988) review relating to the educational study of experience implicitly aligning narrative with qualitatively-oriented educational researchers working with experiential philosophy and critical theory.

In this study, I used the case study strategy approach relating to individual participants for educational life-story interviews in order to obtain narrative data. I analysed that data using the content analysis method, which is defined as a qualitative research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) to understand each participant's situation of educational disadvantage. This

fulfils Rajasekar et al's (2013) explanation of the role of methodology that it is a plan which searches for knowledge and discovers hidden truths, which in this case relate to educational disadvantage of at-riskiness experiences. These experiences were in the form of collectable information from different students: the human beings whom I considered to possess a wealth of experience about their lives in relation to at-riskiness.

My task as researcher was to understand through a more participatory qualitative and naturalistic approach the phenomena of at-riskiness within a context-specific setting (Kuna [Sa]) of Chitungwiza secondary schools. As a researcher, I needed to understand whatever was happening in the participants' personal life histories from possible changing social processes, and that for me meant seeking to understand the lives of these participants and how they managed their everyday educational tasks and roles (Dick, 2000). It was about the participant's entire response to my semi-structured interview, the intention of which was to elicit the participants' educational life stories (Czarniawska, 2004).

The methodology therefore includes such aspects, as follows: the strategy; the action plan; the processes; the design behind the choice; the use of any deliberately chosen methods; and why I used those preferred methods in a certain way (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

This thinking about methodology is elaborated on by Kothari (2009) who states that methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem through concern with the logic, the reasons for the context of the study and the rationale for using a particular technique to achieve the intended research results for evaluation by either the researcher or by others. This illustrates the variety of definitions for methodology in general. For me, this defined methodology as my choice of deciding to look at educational disadvantage and at-riskiness from the critical postmodernist's perspective. I chose this as a further strategy for contextualizing my research and for approaching my data collection using a qualitative research technique of interviews. In this study, the preferred definition was that of a general plan of a systematic inquiry chosen to obtain insight and inspiration, and to collect, analyse and interpret data (Mertens, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The plan demanded that I make up my mind and choose to either implement a qualitative or quantitative research approach or to implement both approaches. The debates between the first two guided my final choice to settle for the qualitative approach.

Qualitative research gives insights into the underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, as well as providing answers to the problem in order to further the development of ideas or hypotheses for potential later quantitative research (Wyse, 2011). Qualitative research uncovers trends in thought and opinions, and delves deeper into the problem.

I also chose to use semi-structured data collection methods in which I was also a participant for this small-sized, carefully selected sample in this narrative inquiry case study. Through objective and systematic analysis, this research investigated experiences of at-riskiness; a social problem which I thought possibly confronted students.

### **4.3 RATIONALE FOR AND EXPOSITION OF NARRATIVE APPROACH**

In order to obtain the participants' real picture of what their perceptions were, participants needed to use their voices to explain the fuller three-dimensional complexities of character, depicting who they were and how they were in their current situations of disadvantage. Participants needed to be given exposition chances, enabling flexibility to move right into and from their pasts into the present, and use various forms of memory-enhancing techniques for fuller, more rounded and elaborate characterisation of themselves. I enabled them to do this through enabling them to use many narrative styles, including flashback and dialogue that supported perceptions on experiences and why things took the current state. This is consistent with Cooper's (2010) definition of narratives when he states that they systematically relate to the function of laying-out and making sense of particular kinds of, if not totally unique, experiences through two elements. First, they order experience. This is a unique experience or the realm where speakers lay out how they as individuals experience certain events and confer their subjective meanings on to the experiences. This is followed by sense making, which involves devices in order to make (this) sense. Cooper (2010) further adds that narrators employ narratives for different purposes, which can be: to make sense to others in communicative and interactive settings; to make sense to themselves in a therapeutic setting; to tell personal experiences they imagined or underwent in person (first-person experiences); and to talk about the experiences of others even fictionally invented others (third-person experiences).

Participants' lives are not only in the present but start with a back-story evolving with time and giving them the story-character (Cooper, 2010). In order to keep the stories moving forward, and to follow the central 'plot' without many digressions, the researcher made use of a number

of narrative expository characteristics. First, the narrative approach studied phenomenon in its natural setting, as opposed to superficial and controlled environments. Narratives happen in real-life settings and are not controlled, contrived or manipulated, as in traditional research (Hatch, 2002). Narratives utilize participant perspectives; those living in it as they act on the realities around them (Hatch, 2002) and capture the perspectives that these participants based their actions on. This means that, within specific social settings, what specifically happened is happening, as well as the meanings that are attached to those happenings (Hatch, 2002). Hence, the prominence attached to perspectives or the voices of the participants, which I exploited as the researcher.

I was the main data gathering instrument, and this was made possible by listening to the participants' views over the course of one month. I carried out inductive data analysis reflexivity in order to make sense of my observations, carried out thematic analysis of the data and suggested content and quotations from the interviews for analysis towards the final script.

#### **4.4 NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

According to Moloeng (2010), the qualitative method obtains descriptive data in spoken form from the people and their observed behaviour. Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman (2012) suggest this strategy in narrative inquiries because it achieves the greatest possible amount of information. Lieblich et al (1998: 45) defined the narrative approach as a study that encompasses the entire response of a research participant faced with an open-ended interview. The narrative approach does this by eliciting the participant's life-story as well as referring to the researcher's interpretation of the research participant's life-story, reflecting the recognition that a social scientific report is a representation (or text) in its own right (Czarniawska, 2004). With a topic such as 'at-riskiness among secondary school students in Zimbabwe' this strategy not only extended beyond a dramatic event or anything difficult in the participants' lives but also to whatever increased the participants' awareness or challenged their understanding of at-riskiness relating to issues of educational access. The narrative technique is defined by Privitera (2015: 64) as a form of interviewing involving the generation of detailed 'stories' of experience from the recounting of specific past events (with clear beginnings, middles and ends) to narratives that traverse temporal and geographical space – biographical accounts that cover entire lives. It is a systematic qualitative research methodology in the social sciences, emphasizing the generation of theory by a discovery methodology from data in the process of

conducting research, allowing the generation of a theoretical account of the features of a topic (Martin & Turner, 1986: 141).

This research became a discursive accomplishment over seven months. During this period, I engaged the participants in evolving conversations where I was the listener while the participants narrated in a long narrator/questioner collaborative relationship. This enabled me to produce and make meaning of the related events and experiences that the participants narrated (Mishler, 1986). This was collaborative and we actively jointly produced meaning (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Unlike other forms of research where the researcher dominates the inquiry, in this narrative interviewing process I was in equal partnership with my participants in every session because they remained free to tell me what they preferred to tell me from their experiences. I also used the storied approach to explore the participants' worlds. This was possible through my understanding of participants' narratives from the past, their present life experiences, and their life roles within their families, as students and as members of their communities (Brott, 2001).

Fortuna (2010) further qualified with emphasis the appropriateness of the need to study behaviour and perceptions in a natural environment for contextual appreciation of the natural surroundings of the data. She further advises the relevance of the context in which that experience occurs and then to use a descriptive, exploratory approach discovering order to identify shifts in the school landscapes, which can be constructed and reconstructed alongside individual and collective accounts of a story constellation. Fortuna (2010) notes that this is consistent with the deep-angle methodology she uses to examine the depth of phenomenon to construct reality in personal and social ways. Accordingly, this study adopts Seale et al's (2012) criteria in the identification of the suitability of narrative inquiry. They advise the use of my experience to look for the most likely cases, as in convenient sampling, for clearer confirmation of any incident of significance to the participant. This conforms to Flanagan's (1954) observation that incident refers to observable human activity sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. Flanagan (1954) further adds that an incident may be events, activities or role behaviour, which in this research means symptoms of at-riskiness, such as absenteeism, class repetition or dropping out of school. The reasons behind why the participants ended up in situations of absenteeism, class repetition or dropping out of school are events that, when probed, make the participants stop

and think, or make them question aspects of their beliefs, values, attitudes or behaviour, and in several ways have significant impact on the participants' educational at-riskiness.

To make sense out of these experienced narratives, I used the framework method for data analysis. This is because this method (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashi & Redwood, 2013) is flexible with its stages of analysis, and is readily compliant with my interests in thematic analysis and constant comparative content analysis, relating narratives to themes established from the literature review and tracing themes embedded in my instrument questions, in addition to themes embedded in my research questions. This whole focus of the process was on identifying themes defined as a pattern in the information that, at minimum, describes and organizes the possible observations, and, at maximum, interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998: 161), which includes patterns derived from the emerging data on the everyday life experiences and behaviour of the participants. This was a methodical approach that sought to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the data and went even further into interpreting various aspects of the research topic, including behaviours (Braun & Clarke, 2006) where this was possible. This was the case when the behaviours supported the core of my thematic analysis. The narrative inquiry suited the study of behaviours against positive or negative patterns of outcomes on educational effectiveness or non-effectiveness and response to why that was the case. Understanding the latter relating to at-risk students in Zimbabwean secondary schools was exactly what motivated this study.

The issue of flexibility further made the narrative inquiry more suitable with regard to understanding problems (Pringle, Bradley, Carmichael, Wallis & Moore, 1995). Problems could be an episode with a significant and deleterious occurrence that potentially ascertained what was possible to learn about the overall quality of education and to indicate changes that could lead to future improvements. Highlighting a systematic narrative inquiry approach echoes the views on methodology expressed by Saunders et al (2009) and by Kothari (2009), which regard case studies as both methodology and method. In this study, it was a method used to explore the narratives on educational at-riskiness.

Marrelli's (2005) description of work context experiences was assimilated into an educational context for the twelve sampled learners in Chitungwiza. Accordingly, for these high school participants, the narrative inquiry included narrative descriptions of important educational life events influencing at-riskiness for them. The participants were free to reveal all their personal

experiences, from which I identified their at-riskiness. Their narratives had room to evolve because the participants were given the time to narrate incidents beyond a particular topic that covered the breadth and width of each participant's life experiences for the collection of more experiences about educational at-riskiness relating to key life events. The narrative inquiry process ended with narrative analysis, which Crisp, Lister and Dutton (2005) define as a deconstruction session whose objective is to find much deeper meaning beneath the surface.

#### **4.4.1 Advantages of the Narrative Inquiry**

The advantages of the narrative inquiry are inexhaustible, but among the most relevant to this study was the applicability of its flexibility on the presentation of personal perspectives (Marrelli, 2005) of at-riskiness issues. Flexibility enabled both the participants and me to define different life experiences and to attach appropriate meanings to what we regarded as at-riskiness. At-riskiness is therefore a multi-mental construction in the way one can apprehend it, with possible conflict even between the same people and between individuals over time (Mertens, 2015). This enabled me to choose a situation-dependent approach in accepting the participants' perspectives.

Creswell (2009) further suggests the recognition of the advantage of narrative inquiries in research because they include at least two players: the researcher and participant(s), with complementary roles of knowledge sharing or data collection by the researcher, where the researcher uses multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationships of themes of the information gathered from participants (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1998).

The narrative inquiry approach was also suitable for this study because it enabled dialogue further credited for its embedded ability to understand meaning out of the social realities of the participants. The initial meanings were through conversation and narratives but equally important were the participants' interpretations of events that shaped situations. I explored each narrative in depth, which I obtained many times, enabling me to approach participants in different ways, revisiting different contexts within both short and long periods of time (Chadwick, 2008). The meaning of words, phrases and sentences was not only conveyed through conversation but also through tone, expression and emotion (Jones & Alony, 2011) because I used all my senses to obtain meaning out of what was said within contexts. Because

I transcribed data verbatim, I tried to include not only every word but also the affective expressions, such as sighing, crying or laughing (Wells, 2011).

This is why the narrative inquiry as a bundle of mixed methods was suitable for the study of factors, variables or behaviours considered vitally critical for the success or failure of educational access-associated outcomes that collect and analyse significant human experiences and yield rich, contextualized data on real-life experiences (Flanagan, 1954).

## **4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **4.5.1 Sampling**

In this study, the purposive sampling technique was adopted. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) explain that purposeful/purposive sampling is used as a strategy when one wants to understand something about certain select cases without needing to generalize in all such cases. My purposive sampling was appropriate in order to identify the phenomena of disadvantage and at-riskiness from selected ‘information-rich cases strategically and purposefully’ (Patton, 2002: 243). My question formulation stage involved asking the participants to narrate their experiences, and this was followed by at least one further interview in the ‘why’ and ‘when’ format for detail. Between these two, and after the second interview, I continuously reflected on the participants’ narratives, which fed into my further questioning the data and context of the data I was collecting, the possible meanings and how I could obtain further meaning.

### **4.5.2 Site Selection and Description**

The site for this study was Chitungwiza: a poor, working-class suburb 25 kilometres outside Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. Chitungwiza suburb had 400,000 residents comprised of mostly unemployed families (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2013). The few who worked did so either by going to Harare or to Chitungwiza’s outer industrial areas or in the informal sector of the economy, since no meaningful or sustained industrial investment for Chitungwiza had been possible since its founding (Stevens & Mugova, 2006). The few formal industries of Chitungwiza, such as corn and textiles, were negatively affected by the turbulent Zimbabwean economic challenges after ESAP and had since closed down, giving rise to the suburb’s unemployment levels, which stood at 84 per cent during the 2012 Census (Stevens &

Mugova, 2006; www.zimstat.co.zw, 2012). Chitungwiza was therefore a typical site for educational at-riskiness. The fact that most Chitungwizan residents could not afford electricity, paraffin, wood or water treatment chemicals due to poverty (Mugumbate, Maushe & Nyoni, 2013) illustrated the typicality of this suburb's poverty.

#### **4.5.2.1 School A**

School A was established in 1987 as a satellite of Seke 1 High School, and was only registered as an established government school in 1990. It is one of the worst performing schools in Chitungwiza, achieving a pass rate of 17 per cent in the 2014 GCSE O-Level examinations for students with five or more passes at C grade (Chitungwiza Regional Secretary's Report 2014) (see Table 3.3: Age, Class Level and Curriculum in Chapter Three). The school has capacity for 600 students. Historically, it could enrol to capacity at the beginning of every year. Some classes in the school tend to have more repeaters enrolling for the first term because the school continues with enrolment so long as there is demand for space. However, by the end of the first term in April, a significant number of students drop out, with even more by the end of the second term, and even fewer coming back for the third term. This has tended to happen every year, and a dropout rate of 69 per cent was recorded for the 2014 Form 4 classes (Chitungwiza Regional Secretary's Report, 2014). Depending on the year and level, sometimes more girls drop out than boys, but this has not been consistent.

After first-term enrolments, it has not always been easy to attract a high number of new students into the school. The school also appears to be attractive to new teachers from rural areas who are desperate to move into the city and who use the school as a stepping stone and soon transfer into other neighbouring schools. There appears to be a high turnover for both students and teachers but there is some stability among the few older staff members.

#### **4.5.2.2 School B**

School B was established in 1995 as a community school. It has a stable staff cohort but struggles to attract good-quality-pass students into Form 1. It has tended to be the school of 'last choice' because it has a reputation in Chitungwiza for poor discipline. Most of the students are repeaters or transferees from other schools for various reasons. The school has capacity for 700 students but is never at full capacity. Some members of staff have been in the school since

1995 but its pass rate remains very low, and, last year, among the 157 students who took O-Level examinations, only 21 per cent (33 candidates) passed with five or more passes (Chitungwiza Regional Secretary’s Report, 2014) (see Table 3.3: Age, Class Level and Curriculum in Chapter Three).

#### 4.5.2.3 Selection of Participants

There is no recommended sample size in this type of research as long as there is enough for theoretical saturation (Curry, Nembhard & Bradley, 2009) to confirm the phenomenon. I therefore selected three male participants and three female participants from both School A and School B with confirmed characteristics of student at-riskiness: namely, either absenteeism or grade repetition, if not both. All participants were in Form 4 classes. I used purposive critical case sampling (N= 12). This kind of sampling is defined by Given (2008) as looking for a decisive case that helps make a decision for which several different explanations are most plausible, or is a particularly useful example of the generalizations. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 list the actual participants under pseudonyms in order to reflect the ethical consideration of confidentiality. My plan was to identify the demographic characteristics of each participant and to capture and present them in a completed version of this table, which I did after confirming each participant’s details during the data collection stage.

**Table 4.1: School A Participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age (Nearest whole)	Family Background					Sampling Criteria	
			Birth Position	Marital Status of Household	Socio-economic Status of	Home Language	Total Household Members	Absenteeism	Grade Repeater
Mary	F	18	5	Single	Poor	Shona	5	Y	R
Portia	F	18	4	Married	Poor	Shona	7	Y	
Chena	F	18	1	Single	Very Poor	Shona	5		R
Godf	M	18	3	Single	Poor	Shona	6	Y	R
Kudzi	M	19	1	Single	Very Poor	Shona	9	Y	R
Kalal	M	18	5	Separated	Very Poor	Shona	7	Y	R

**Table 4.2: School B Participants**

Pseudonym	Gender	Age (Nearest whole)	Family Background					Sampling Criteria		
			Birth Position	Marital Status of Household Head	Socio-economic Status of Family	Home Language	Total Household m Members	Absenteeism	Grade Repeater	
Siphi	F	19	6	Married	Poor	Shona	6	Y		
Shar	F	18	3	Single	Poor	Shona	5	Y	Y	
Daisy	F	18	3	Single	Very Poor	Shona	8	Y		
Much	M	18	1	Single	Very Poor	Shona	5	Y	Y	
Tonde	M	19	5	Single	Poor	Shona	8	Y	Y	
Gerry	M	18	6	Single	Very Poor	Shona	7	Y	Y	

Accordingly, the criteria for inclusion in this study totalled only two, and these were a high absence record (i.e. once a week, according to the class register and/or a high frequency in the school punishment log book) and/or repeaters. I explained this criterion to my carefully-selected pilot study participants. As advised by Schutze (1981), I held two introductory meetings. The purpose of the first meeting was for me to enable the participants to get to know me through this initial contact and to give them an idea of the task of educational life-story telling as a first step for establishing a mutual trust relationship. I visited the participants in their schools. The second meeting, again in their schools, was to clarify our *modus operandi*. Accordingly, we met in each school's designated classroom. I gave the potential participants consent forms to be completed by their parents and clarified that they would only participate after their parents had signed (see Appendix E). During this meeting, I realized that three of the repeaters were already over 18 and therefore did not need parental consent. We agreed on the meetings' plan, subject to confirmation for participation for those participants who needed parental consent clearance.

#### **4.5.3 Data Gathering Methods and Procedures**

In this research I sought to provide evidence for the experiences of at-riskiness; the phenomenon under investigation for potential quantitative research (Polkinghorne, 2005: 138). My data gathering methods and procedures' objectives achieved this through captured words for my data/words from explanations of accounts participants gave of their experiences, from

which I drew excerpts of the data to illustrate the findings from the verbal evidential data. I initiated the process by first presenting open-ended questions to the participants, according to the McAdams' (1995) framework (see Appendix G). The participants responded to my semi-structured life-story interview open-ended questions on their educational life-story interviews within the Chitungwizan schools; the researched phenomenon's natural setting for these participants (Iacono, Brown & Holtham, 2009). The semi-structured life-story interview is defined as a method of data collection through asking in-depth questions to the participants in personal and intimate face-to-face sessions (Polit & Beck, 2006). I asked open, direct, verbal questions that elicited detailed narratives and stories (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and also empowered the respondents as active participants who retained their choice on how much they wanted to state to me. When I probed after reflecting on their circumstances they freely explained why things were the way they stood during the time of the fieldwork.

Individual narratives provided the main form of data in this study. This was the preferred approach for this oral data (Brikci & Green, 2007). Brikci and Green (2007) further justify oral data from narratives as an ideal way of understanding more about a sample because it is naturally flexible. They add that narratives enable the researcher to listen to stories that participants tell, what they will complain about, and what can and what cannot be said in various situations. Furthermore, one could approach narratives through informal conversations as participants went about their business, which was more informative compared to a formal group interview (Brikci & Green, 2007). In this research, this was all carried out while participants were in school over the course of seven months. Narratives in the context of participants' daily lives provide privileged access to what is important to people locally, and how they think about it (Brikci & Green, 2007). This is why I used a life-story semi-structured interview method for my data gathering tool (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

I did this partly, according to Eadie, MacAskill, Brooks, Heim, Forsyth and Punch's (2010) strategy of first conducting an introductory meeting with the participants to share insights and to emphasize the condition for parental written consent (see Appendix E) and the participants' written assent to participate (see Appendix F). All our meetings were conducted in a designated meeting room suitably allocated by each school headmaster from any interference and according to a timetable agreed with the headmasters for out-of-school time so that the interviews did not interfere with the participants' school programmes. This was after I had politely asked the head to leave us on our own because his presence could have potentially

influenced the participants' behaviour (Mantle, Moules, Johnson, Leslie, Parsons & Shaffer, 2007) through the possible generation of too much undesirable formality.

Initially, the participants chose to speak in English but I soon found out that they were not able to adequately express themselves in English on some issues. In the interest of progress, we then agreed to revert to Shona (for later translation) from the second session onwards. I recorded the interviews openly on my digital recorder after clarifying this data capture procedure to the participants.

As a participant researcher, I too was a data gathering instrument by virtue of my being sensitive and collecting all that I felt answered my research questions. My greatest consideration was for the spoken word for participant responses. Data collection involved first presenting open-ended questions to the participants, according to McAdams' (1995) framework (see Appendix G). Initially, I planned to carry out the first interview and then only one follow-up interview per participant. A broad spill question, or the 'the hook' was used to start the conversation before opening the proper interview Edwards and Holland (2013). For the general, I asked the participants to tell me about their secondary school education and highlighting the issues they regarded to be very significant. This was followed by appropriate probes while maintaining an inductive stance throughout as I adopted McAdams' (1995) framework (see Appendix G), as follows:

*Every person's life can be written as a book. I would like you to think about your educational life in secondary school now as if you were writing a book. First, think about the chapters of this book and, if you want to use a piece of paper, that is fine. Now, close your eyes and think. Remember now you are in Form 1, Form 2, Form 3 and finally in Form 4. What happened? You can break periods into chapters if you want.*

*When did the first stage (chapter) end? Then go on to the next chapters, and put down the age that each one begins and ends for you. Go on till you reach your present age now that you are in Form 4 in this school this year: March 2016.*

*You can use any number of chapters or stages that you find suitable to your own secondary school educational life. Now, can you give the first phase a title and in doing so think about the following questions for each chapter:*

*Tell me about a significant episode or a memory that you remember from this stage.*

*What kind of a person were you during this stage?*

*Who were significant people for you during this stage, and why?*

*And what is your reason for choosing to terminate this stage when you did?*

*Can we now go on to Chapter Two? What happens in this chapter and who is with you and where and why? Do you want to go back there?*

(Adopted from Wells 2011: 4)

Data analysis and comparisons were simultaneous, and this guided further development of interviews with either the same participant or prepared me for the next participant. Similarities were clustered/grouped into themes to enable me to experiment and see what emerged and how that narrative related to my research interest and how best I could approach the next participant. This directed my further data collection till saturation. After Phase 2 interviews, nothing new appeared interesting from two of the participants. They repeated what they had previously mentioned and recorded despite any determined efforts at varying my questioning and wording for these participants to see their situations differently.

An example is when I experimented with Lupton's (1999: 455) suggestion of deconstructing the data in a process of looking for the underlying socio-cultural meanings of texts. I wanted the participants to explain their family situations within the expected cultural/gender roles for perspectives of gender sensitivity. As per many other attempts, these two participants did not indicate any awareness relevant to the progression of my study.

I proceeded with the remaining ten participants with narratives that provided more fertile areas for probing and identifying new issues. This is consistent with Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008), who posit that initial analysis of the data may also further inform subsequent data collection, and interview schedules may be slightly modified in light of emerging findings, when additional clarification may be required.

This flexibility and dynamic data collection ensured that my data collection remained relevant and maximized the potential of participant data for me to discover many dimensions of the phenomenon of at-riskiness from relevant participants before saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This left me with time for further data analysis, reflecting and preplanning my next

interviews according to the three phases of my research. These phases overlapped during the interviews. The three phases were:

#### Phase 1 (March–April)

- Initial informal interviews and commencement of data collection and downloading from recorded twelve participants till saturation.
- Familiarization and constant comparisons.
- Interview transcribing and contact summary.
- Developing basic/conceptual themes.

(Taylor & Gibbs, 2010)

#### Phase 2 (May–June)

- Extensive data collection and constant comparisons.
- In-depth case interviews with remaining ten identified participants of interest from Phase 1.
- Experimentation with data reduction and further thematizing/organizing themes.

#### Phase 3 (July–September)

- Further comparisons for global themes.
- Confirmation of themes.
- Reporting.

## **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING**

Cooper (2010) posits that narrative data analysis attempts to systematically relate the narrative means deployed for the function of laying out and making sense of particular kinds of, if not totally unique, experiences, which in this study were experiences of at-riskiness. The two fundamental approaches to analysing qualitative data possible in this research were the deductive approach and the inductive approach (Burnard et al, 2008). These two approaches differ in that, in the first approach, I would use a structure or a predetermined framework to analyse data by imposing that structure or theories on the data, and then use that to analyse the interviews. I wanted the data to ‘talk for itself’, and for that reason I therefore adopted the inductive approach, appraised for its enabling data analysis with little or no predetermined theory or structure but the actual data itself to derive the structure of analysis (Burnard et al,

2008). Making sense of the data involved my first listening to the recorded interviews and then remembering the context and how I had captured the recordings. I further analysed transcripts, identified themes within the data and gathered together examples of those themes from the texts that I had transcribed verbatim. I coded the texts by making notes in the margin of words, labelling themes or adding short phrases to sum up what the text said to me in the hope of making a summarizing statement or word for each element that I had identified as being significant in the transcript (Burnard et al, 2008).

I achieved this by focusing on interview responses and narrative text for my thematic data analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) under the framework method with two goals in mind:

1. To understand what participants ‘really’ thought, felt or did in some situations or at some point in time for the richness of real-life experiences of at-riskiness.
2. To adopt a hermeneutic perspective on texts in which I viewed texts as an interpretation that I could never judge as true or false.

Narrative data analysis is both the means and the way in which these means are used to arrive at presentations and interpretations of meaningful experiences (Cooper, 2010). This qualitative research method generated words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis (Brikci & Green, 2007; Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). They further suggest that, in order to generate narrative data for analysis, the researcher needs to regard the whole narrative as a unit of analysis and in an ongoing exercise starting with the first interview. To make this convenient and efficient, I adopted Wells’ (2011) framework methodology and data analysis because this method offered practical guidelines which I considered suitable for both simultaneous data collection and analysis during and after at least two interview sessions per participant. I did this, as guided by McLaughlin (Sa), who suggested the following combinations in order to capture the themes:

1. Constant comparative content analysis.
2. Themes generated from the literature review.
3. Themes embedded in instrument questions.
4. Themes embedded in research questions.

Themes are defined as something important about the data in relation to the research question, and representing some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set, irrespective of size of prevalence across the entire data set, even if there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, themes were regarded as belonging to phenomenological epistemology, gave experience primacy, and sought to understand the participants' everyday experience of reality in greater detail so that I could gain an understanding of the phenomenon of at-riskiness (Holloway & Todres, 2003; McLeod, 2001; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

#### **4.6.1 Constant Comparative Content Analysis**

With regard to constant comparative content analysis, the literature advised that the family composition of disadvantaged children also indicated disadvantage through the socio-economic activities of the respective members. Therefore, in my probing questions, I included non-ambiguous content aspects that sought confirmation comments relating to the family status of the household head, ownership of a home and personal space for the participant. This was consistent with Holsti's (1969: 14) broad definition of content analysis when he states that it is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. I also did not want a restrictive definition but one applicable to other areas, such as the coding of actions and gestures during the interviews, in order to replicate the criteria from participant to participant. The probing questions I presented here were therefore designed to elicit definite characteristics of the definition of content analysis, according to Krippendorff (2004), whereby content is about the characteristics of educational disadvantage, by answering the following questions:

1. Which data are analysed?
2. How are they defined?
3. What is the population from which they are drawn?
4. What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?
6. What is the target of the inference?

(Krippendorff, 2004, in Baker & Ellece, 2010: 21)

I then added the responses to these questions to my handwritten analysis charts filled with cut and pasted notes of various representative colours for each participant. The charts made it easy to make comparisons, for example, I could identify which child lived with both parents, lived in a single room, had five or more siblings, what birth number they were in the family, how this compared with the rest of the participants from the other school, and also by gender. I simplified my boundaries by asking for straightforward responses. Either the participant lived with their father or not, and, if not, how often they met up, and I would also ask if they had an amicable relationship relating to their educational access and what words they used to explain such relationships, which indicated a participant perspective as central to content analysis coding. This fulfilled the posited argument that, with the inductive approach, themes are generated from the data through open (unrestricted) coding, followed by refinement of themes, using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research (Gale et al, 2013).

#### **4.6.2 Themes Generated from the Literature Review**

Literature relating to Zimbabwe's socio-economic disadvantages for children carried out by researchers, including Robson (2004), in general had earlier indicated to me the possible themes of family sickness, poverty, child carers, poor working conditions and child labour at the expense of the children's education. I then used this background in my analysis to appreciate the participants' responses and to probe for time use management, whereby participants would indicate their economic activities' themes, such as work both at home or to raise supplementary income for the home, which then confirmed the theme of child labour and the sub-theme of time shortages.

#### **4.6.3 Themes Embedded in Instrument Questions**

The themes were embedded in the following instrument questions:

1. Tell me about your secondary school education, highlighting issues you regard to be very significant (educational life journey, plot, positive and negative influencing factors, for example, bereavement, unemployment, poverty, single parent, economic climate).

2. What words can you use to describe fellow students who are likely to be expelled from this school? Why? (behaviour, drugs, etc.).
3. How does this school minimize at-riskiness? (counselling, prefect system).
4. Why do we not have adequate resources in this school or at home? (poverty, unemployment).

#### **4.6.4 Themes Embedded in Research Questions**

The themes were embedded in the following research questions:

Research Question 1a: The needs; 1b: The characteristics of at-risk students.

Research Question 2: The behaviour of at-risk students.

Research Question 3: How at-riskiness appeared in the Zimbabwean education system.

Research Question 4: The characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness.

Research Question 5: The contextual factors contributing to the incidence of at-riskiness.

In the sessions, I also wrote down affective expressions, such as sighing, crying or laughing, and I found it helpful to immediately listen to the recordings and relate to how the narratives had been presented while it was still fresh in my mind. I also asked the interviewee to give me a title for each chapter relating to their educational lives:

*Tell me about a significant episode or a memory that you remember from this stage.*

*What kind of a person were you during this stage?*

*Who were significant people for you during this stage, and why?*

*What is your reason for choosing to terminate this stage when you did?*

The recorded data were then processed according to the following seven-stage framework method for analysis procedure (Gale et al, 2013):

Stage 1: Transcription

Stage 2: Familiarization with the interview

Stage 3: Coding

Stage 4: Developing a working analytical framework

Stage 5: Applying the analytical framework

Stage 6: Charting data into the framework matrix

Stage 7: Interpreting the data

The above steps for qualitative data analysis also roughly correspond to the five steps of data analysis compiled by Wells (2011) and O'Connor and Gibson (2003: 9) for my framework. A framework in qualitative data analysis served to establish the highest degree of clarity of the conceptual methods that I applied in order to follow the principles of formal logic (Schutz 1967), which I merged in order to come up with the plan below.

#### **4.7 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES PLAN**

In this section, I introduce my data analysis plan. This is critical in order to explain the type of analysis used in examining the data against the research questions. My objective here was to clean the data and transform it into what it meant based on the assumptions from my literature review within the qualitative analytic strategy.

##### **Stage 1: Transcription**

The most important consideration for the framework method of qualitative data analysis was my good-quality audio recording, which made it easier for a verbatim transcription of the interview. When downloading the recordings, I did not follow the conventions of dialogue transcriptions but concentrated on the content, which provided the focus of my study (Gale et al, 2013). I deliberately created wide margins to create space for later coding and notes. This transcription stage, as confirmed by Gale et al (2013), provided me with the opportunity to immerse myself in the data. Resources permitting, I would have sought the services of a professional transcriber, because this task was very challenging. However, I also realized that doing this myself proved important for my personal appreciation and conceptualization of the data pattern (Wells, 2011).

##### **Stage 2: Familiarization With the Interview**

In order to become more familiar with the whole interview and its global content, I replayed the audio recording and/or transcript. I tried to put all the words within the context of what was

said from what I could remember. I looked at my reflective notes and made further reflective notes in my efforts to be more effective in my interpretation of the interviews. I listened again to all or parts of the audio recording (Gale et al, 2013), aiming to familiarize myself with any possible contradictions, unfinished descriptions and issues that may have disturbed the participants (O’Connor & Gibson, 2003: 9; Wells, 2011). I used the margin for my analytical notes, thoughts or impressions (Gale et al, 2013), and further tabulated some of my observations, as in Table 4.3, in preparation for my coding step.

**Table 4.3: Tabulation of Observations**

Wrote (Verbatim)	Made Lists
The various answers/responses	Recurring words, ideas, concepts and themes

**Stage 3: Coding**

Boyatzis (1998: 1) defined a good code as one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. To achieve this, it became necessary for me to carry out a preliminary scanning of the transcript, using a priori knowledge about at-riskiness, based on the research question and my theoretical (Schutz, 1967) understanding that the Zimbabwean socio-economic situation had, according to literature and an average man’s understanding, precipitated unemployment, household hardships and subsequent educational at-riskiness. I reread each transcript line by line, applying a paraphrase or label (‘code’) that described what I had interpreted in the passage as important from as many different perspectives as possible (Gale et al, 2013).

While I read the transcript with an open mind regarding the emerging codes, I approached my data analysis believing from my literature that some themes, for example, the theme of single parenthood, were substantive when considering factors of at-riskiness. I was therefore willing to learn more from the experience while remaining aware and clear of particular behaviours, incidents, structures and values (for example, those that inform or underpin certain statements, such as a belief in gender imbalance among most Zimbabwean families caused girls to be considered last for education when families had to make choices), emotions (for example, sorrow, frustration, love) and more impressionistic/methodological elements (for example,

participants found something difficult to explain, participants became emotional, participants felt uncomfortable) (Gale et al, 2013). Such codes enabled me to identify themes across the data, clustered under headings that directly related to my five research questions, which became my five themes under data analysis:

1. Needs and characteristics
2. Behaviour
3. Evidence
4. Ameliorating programmes
5. Catalysing factors

I identified specific themes to follow within the story. This coding process aimed to classify all of the data so that I was able to more systematically compare each piece of data with other parts of the data set (Gale et al, 2013). This provided me with a holistic impression of what the participants had said and, in order to improve my efficiency relating to this, I realized that coding line-by-line made me more alert to considering issues that ordinarily would remain invisible because, through probing, I identified the participants' own perceptions of the circumstances/how the participants interpreted their absenteeism (Wells, 2011), which had been said in an unclear way and did not tally with the rest of the account (Gale et al, 2013). Challenging what was said which did not tally with the rest made me seek further explanation as I probed more, which made my data analysis stronger.

#### **Stage 4: Developing a Working Analytical Framework**

After coding the first transcript, I came up with a set of codes, which I regarded as being applicable to all subsequent transcripts. I followed Gale et al's (2013) suggestion of grouping codes together into diagrams like a tree. In the end, such diagrams enabled me to clearly define them under my tree analytical framework. This stage was iterative until I could see no additional codes emerging from each life-story. I avoided ignoring data that did not fit my analytical framework until I had coded the last piece of data (Gale et al, 2013).

## Stage 5: Applying the Analytical Framework

I then used my tree analytical framework for indexing subsequent transcripts using the codes I had identified from the first transcript. For ease of application, I assigned each code a number and then wrote the relevant number whenever the code appeared. The visual tree analytical framework enabled ease of storing and organizing the data for the analysis process.

## Stage 6: Charting Data into the Framework Matrix

Although my participants only totalled twelve, the data generated was substantial, and for charting this data I designed a data comparison matrix

**Table 4.4: Data Comparison Matrix**

	Theme 1		Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
	Needs	Characteristics	Behaviour	Evidence	Ameliorating Programmes	Catalysing Factors
Mary	Teachers	Poverty Time poor Carer	Unsociable Absenteeism	School indiscipline	Guidance and counselling	Loss of employment
Portia	Classrooms	Single mother Household Insecure	Bored Angry Unsociable Absenteeism	Teacher shortages	Revision classes	Lack of employment
Chen	Learning resources	Family debt	Bored Roaming	Household roles	Guidance and counselling	Unreliable income
Godf	Furniture	Hunger	Avoidant Absenteeism			
Kudz	Specialized rooms	Isolated	Bored, Unsociable Absenteeism	Single parentage	Textbooks Donations	Unemployment
Kalal	Office	Unstable schooling Poverty	Lack attention Absenteeism Bored Roaming			
Siphi	Food Classrooms	Intact family Household debt	Negative behaviour Absenteeism	Myth	Guidance and counselling	No earnings
Shar	Money	Family debt	Teacher/ Student relations	Lack of teacher commitment	Revision classes	Unemployment

			Absenteeism			
Daisy	Hygiene	Hungry	Aspirations	Resources shortages	School rules	Economic meltdown
Much	Uniforms	Isolated	Support needs Absenteeism	Few classrooms	Prefect system	Closedown of industries
Tonde	Teachers' rooms	Poverty	Negative behaviour Absenteeism	Lack of resources	Donor	Poverty
Gerry	Rooms Window panes	Unstable schooling	Teacher/student relations Absenteeism	Partnerships	Discipline	No earnings

I then summarized the data by codes, which I used to identify themes and sub-themes or patterns that emerged from the coded data. These themes emerged from patterns, such as choice of storyline, during the chapters which the participants were initially asked to break down their lives into (which also guided their conversation topics) vocabulary and frequency of occurrence (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 72) from each transcript.

I struggled with maintaining a balance between reducing the data on the one hand and retaining the original meanings and 'feel' of the interviewees' words on the other hand (Gale et al, 2013). In the data comparison matrix chart, I included references to interesting or illustrative quotations with (anonymized) transcript number, page and line reference. This was a laborious exercise, particularly with the first few transcripts.

### **Stage 7: Interpreting the Data**

I achieved my interpretations of the data through rigorous analysis, including illustrative findings with quotations from, or access to, the raw data (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). In order to ensure that correct data was being received from the first contact with the participants, I jotted down my impressions and ideas from the responses relating to this study. I thought about anything from the responses that made me curious, and in a few lines examined whether the idea, concept or potential theme was or was not represented under my analytical memo page (Gale et al, 2013). As I explored the data further, 'y', the characteristics of and differences between the data, became easily identifiable as 't' typologies, interrogating theoretical concepts emerging from the data and mapping connections between relationships and/or causality (Gale et al,

2013) to explain the experienced areas that are not functioning well and are causal to the phenomenon of educational at-riskiness (according to the participants).

From a practical perspective, I drew diagrams and then summed up all the revealed data ideas into the codes and themes in Table 4.5 as I constantly strived to gain more meaning from the words used by the participants (Cho & Lee, 2014). The emerging meanings enabled me to develop conceptual themes relating to my topic and the research question and to reflect the reviewed literature. The outcome and summary of these themes' identification and confirmation processes are according to Table 4.5, which integrates the codes into sub-themes and then the main themes of this study.

**Table 4.5: Revealed Data Codes and Themes**

<b>Research Question (RQ)</b>	<b>Interview questions</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Main Theme</b>
RQ1: The needs and characteristics of at-risk students	1. General introductions			
	2. Tell me about your secondary school education highlighting issues you regard to be very significant	1. Teachers 2. Classrooms 3. Learning resources 4. Furniture 5. Specialized rooms. 6. Office 7. Food 8. Money 9. Hygiene 10. Uniforms 11. Books 12. Revision 13. Time	Needs/shortages	Disadvantage
		1. Unstable schooling 2. Poverty 3. Single-mother household 4. Family debt 5. Hunger 6. Isolated	Characteristics	

RQ2: The behaviour of at-risk students	2. What words can you use to describe fellow students who are likely to be expelled from this school? Why?	1. Negative behaviour 2. Teacher/student relations 3. Aspirations 4. Support needs	Behaviour	
RQ3: The characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness	3. How does this school minimize at-riskiness?	1. Guidance and counselling 2. Revision classes 3. School rules 4. Prefect system 4. Donor 5. Discipline		Ameliorating programmes
RQ4: How at-riskiness appeared in the Zimbabwean education system		Individual level: 1. Indiscipline 2. Teacher shortage 3. Household roles 4. Teacher shortages 5. Single parentage	Evidence	Disadvantage
		School level: 1. Teacher commitment 2. Myth 4. Resources 5. Classroom space 6. School resources 7. Partnerships	Evidence	
RQ5: The contextual factors contributing to the incidence of at-riskiness	5. Why do you have inadequate resources in this school or at home?	Community level/national policy impact: 1. No earnings 2. Unemployment 3. Economic meltdown 4. Closedown of industries 5. Poverty	Resources	Socio-economic factors

#### 4.8 CREDIBILITY OF DATA

I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) steps on trustworthiness criteria and techniques to ensure credibility of data according to Table 4.6:

**Table 4.6: Credibility of Data**

<p><b>Credibility (internal validity)</b></p>	<p>1. Prolonged engagement 2. Persistent observation 3. Triangulation (sources, methods, investigators) 4. Peer debriefing 5. Negative case analysis 6. Referential adequacy (archiving of data) 7. Member checks 8. Thick description</p>	<p>I had seven months of contact with participants, interviewed, made notes, digitally recorded and updated my transcripts during my fieldwork. I also used my research diary where I made rich descriptions, summaries and self- memos of what the data appeared to mean.  I further stored all the raw data for continuous reference and reflection.</p>
<p><b>Transferability (external validity)</b></p>	<p>9. Overlap methods (triangulation of methods)</p>	<p>I made a clear presentation of my research design.</p>
<p><b>Dependability (reliability)</b></p>	<p>10. Dependability audit Examining the process of the inquiry (how data was collected; how data was kept; accuracy of data)</p>	<p>This was a supervised study by UNISA to ensure that I met a high standard of validity and reliability in the findings. They critically analysed my steps of data analysis and reviewed my transcripts.</p>
<p><b>Confirmability (objectivity)</b></p>	<p>11. Confirmability audit Examining the product to attest that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by data</p>	<p>I collected data between March and September 2016 through interviewing each participant one-to-one. I repeated this process at least ten times with each participant over the seven months for verification and consistency to confirm findings. Findings were verified through presentation to participants so that they could confirm my findings. I then used literature to confirm possible interpretations of the findings.  This was further checked by my supervisor.</p>

(Adapted from Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

The repeatability by others of this study for purposes of quality assessment and the reliability of the findings in similar circumstances are subject to the limitations of narrative inquiries and case studies. This research was an example of a narrative inquiry, and only explored at-riskiness in Chitungwiza at a particular point in time and as experienced by a few purposely-chosen

participants, in snapshot circumstances (Mann, 2006). These narrative inquiry limitations are also confirmed by Glaser (1992) when he states that the newly discovered theory was applicable locally and was solidly grounded in context-specific core values, understandings and boundaries. Moreover, Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) confirm that participants' understanding of the truth changes, is contingent, and memory is fallible. This suggests that it was not always possible to recall or report on events in language that exactly represented how those events were lived and felt. I therefore recognized that people who had experienced the same event often told different stories about what had happened (Tullis, Jullian, MacRae, Adams & Vitale, 2009), and this was why I needed the period from March to September to ensure that I had the chance to establish clarity from the same participant over his/her narrative. Bochner (2001) concludes that the researcher on narratives needs to contend with the literary licence allowing him/her to redefine validity as to mean evoking a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible; a feeling that what has been represented could be true, that the story is coherent and that it provides continuity in the participants' lives. The narrative needed to also achieve a desire in the reader to want to improve the lives of participants (Ellis, 2004).

#### **4.9 PILOT STUDY**

A pilot study for this research was necessary and was carried out in order to examine the feasibility (Leon, Lori & Kraemer, 2011) of using McAdams' (1995) framework (see Appendix G) within the context of Zimbabwean schools. I also wanted to develop a systematic approach/consistent practice (Leon et al, 2011) through testing my capacity to encourage participants to talk to me.

The pilot study assisted as a 'dress rehearsal' to test the tasks and timing in order to obtain usable data (Schade, 2015). I piloted on two male and two female ex-teachers from Chitungwiza's high-density schools for a greater insight into the design, usability strengths and weaknesses of my interview schedule (Schade, 2015).

These former teachers advised on further probing techniques to develop my questioning in a practical and effective way to yield more meaningful and realistic results. I became more innovative with my topic discussion development technique, improved my probing techniques and expanded the depth of knowledge which my questions could achieve on aspects of at-

riskiness through refining my questions prior to launching the actual study (Kvale, 2014). I also refreshed my knowledge about the prevailing socio-economic environment, which made me more confident with my capacity to detect perceptions on evidence of at-riskiness.

#### **4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

To carry out this research, I was guided by the UNISA Graduate School of Education research protocol, which gave me an ethical clearance certificate from the College of Education, UNISA (see Appendix A). They also recommended certain other permits and permissions, which I obtained as follows:

- A research permit from the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (see Appendix B).
- Written permission from the Harare Region and the Chitungwiza District Office (see Appendix C).
- Permission from the headmasters of the selected schools (see Appendix D).
- Written consent from the parents (see Appendix E).
- Written assent from student participants (see Appendix F).

The above gave me the legitimacy to seek and obtain consent and assent from each student. I sought approval, as is required when sampling involves human beings who understand and can give consent. There was no foreseeable harm to the participants, their families, their schools or the Ministry of Education as an organization. I sought clearance from the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture through their Head Office, and then approached the Harare Region and the Chitungwiza District Office, from whom I was given permission to access the schools. Head Office indicated interest in the findings from my study, and a copy was made available to them.

##### **4.10.1 Informed Consent**

Informed consent is about the right of participants to know how they are involved in a research, the right to be informed about the nature of the research and the right to withdraw at any time from the research (Whittaker, 2009). I obtained this informed consent from each participant by ensuring that they understood what I would be doing before commencing the research (Clark,

2012). I answered any concerns that each potential participant had before asking them to sign for assent after their parental consent to ensure that I would work with only consent-signed participants. My desire was not to harm participants or their institutions.

Since my participants were human beings, I was bound by the research ethical requirement, which demanded that I recognize the relevance of informed consent for this research. This is a process of agreeing to take part in a study based on access to all relevant and easily digestible information about what participation means, in particular, in terms of harm and benefits (Parahoo, 2006). To fulfil this, I first held a meeting with all the authorities and potential participants where I explained what volunteering for this study would entail. I assured them that they were not obliged to participate, that they were free to withdraw at any time up to just before the final research draft and that there were no rewards for participation. This is consistent with Wiles, Crow, Charles and Heath (2007), who also highlight the need to give people the right to withdraw from participation in a study at any point.

I then explained the requirement of the law for minors, which required that they needed to have their parental signed consent first before they could sign for their personal assent. I committed myself to ensuring that these participants were safe. They are adolescents and disadvantaged, which could make them very vulnerable, and I chose to be transparent in the way in which I related to them. I gave every potential participant the chance to think about my proposal and to ask questions, which I answered honestly. I assured them that there was no foreseeable harm to them. I only worked with obtained permission, and aimed to leave the participants and the schools in a better informed, rather than a worse, situation.

Once approval had been granted, I was concerned about the potential effect of the challenges of Zimbabwean political conflicts contaminating or misconstruing my research objectives (Sakızlıoğlu 2014). This made me take care with regard to my political comments and how the research could be perceived by members of the ruling ZANU PF party; some of whom were suspicious and critical of the concept of a UK-based research student working in Zimbabwe and asking about reflections on failure. However, this did not become an issue.

#### **4.10.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity are defined as acts of speaking or writing in confidence or being charged with secrets and of unknown name and unknown authorship with regard to research (Wiles, Crow, Charles & Heath, 2006). I protected the participants' identities in the research findings (Woods & Pratt, 2005). This is also the view of Alston & Bowles (2013), who state that participants need to know that they are in a safe space to talk freely regarding sensitive, personal experiences, and that their words will be shown care and respect in their distribution. I accordingly assured the potential participants that I would respect what they told me, would keep it confidential between the two of us and that no one else would have the means to trace what they personally had told me during the interview. I further told them that I would only use the said information for my research purposes. I also explained that I would code their responses and download them on to my password-protected personal computer and would destroy their responses after my final draft, in accordance with the ethical expectations of my university. In publishing the results, I anonymized individuals and places in a way that protected participants' identities, as earlier promised. Each participant was reassured about their confidentiality.

#### **4.10.3 Privacy**

Participant privacy was also respected. I only asked for what I thought would be 'comfortable' for the participants to reveal to me. The participants remained in control of the extent to which I could access them. I remained aware and never asked or forced them to reveal information to me that they did not wish to reveal (Sieber, 2006). I did not challenge them whenever they declined to answer any questions.

#### **4.10.4 Competency**

I approached this research with an open mind even though I had personal feelings about what at-riskiness could mean to these participants. I regarded this as an opportunity for me to strategize and demonstrate the application of my research knowledge, understanding, practical and thinking skills for effective data collection as a graduate research student (www.rcn.org.uk, 2011). Although I had taught in similar schools within the neighbourhood, this had taken place a few years beforehand. From my knowledge base, I was aware that the socio-economic

situation had changed for the worse since I was last active in Zimbabwean schools. The socio-educational environment was not stable under the prevailing policies. However, I am a qualified Grade 1 high school headmaster with a considerable number of years' experience working within the same system. I had further trained in conducting interviews, which gave me added confidence in my professional and research competency to carry out this study. Furthermore, I spoke the local home language and was a resident of the suburb. The participants were initially asked to use English but, as we progressed, I made the strategic decision of reverting to Shona so that they could fully explore their emotions, and I recorded their responses for later translation.

#### **4.10.5 Sensitivity: Harm, Caring and Fairness**

Morris (2006) states that it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that involved participants are free from harm; even more so for vulnerable groups. I assessed that these participants could be vulnerable to sadness and re-traumatization by talking about possible past events, psychological harm and related unpleasant experiences. This was thoroughly discussed, and assurance was given that, if the participants did not feel comfortable to proceed, we would stop immediately. I was also ready to engage the school's regular counselling support to take over. The interview would only proceed with the individual if they were still willing to proceed.

I remained focused on the objectives of the research only, without any deception. Researchers should avoid deceiving participants about the nature of the research (McLeod, 2015). I ensured that the participants were safe by following the school regulations prescribed by the headmaster. He designated a particular room for my use at given times. The participants and I then met in this room, which was accessible, open and suitable for the purpose. Although I had originally said that there would be no rewards, during this fieldwork it became clear to me that some of the participants needed refreshment, and I provided drinks and biscuits, not as rewards but as the necessary refreshments during interview sessions. This was because some of the scheduled interview times were after school hours when some participants were visibly hungry and tired although still willing to engage.

Throughout this research I watched out for signs of distress among the participants and was ready to inform the school if the need arose for health or counselling support. I further informed the participants to ask me to stop for a break if the issues or any incident during the interview

were drifting towards discomfort. I was ready to follow up and ensure that the participants had been supported to access the schools' psychological services if the need arose.

Participants reserved the right to withdraw throughout the fieldwork period until the beginning of November when I had completed the final draft. At the end of the fieldwork, I acknowledged their participation through certificates of appreciation stating that they had been volunteer participants in the research.

#### **4.11 RESEARCHER ROLE**

My historical service in schools potentially impacted my practitioner inquirer role (Neal, 2009). Backgrounds influence value judgements (Iacono et al, 2009) for insider participant (Iacono et al, 2009). I questioned my at-riskiness awareness, the limitations to my seeing (Russell & Kelly, 2002), and my behavioural assumptions, and chose to subjectively regard each participant's reality of at-riskiness as their truth (Ratner, 2002). As a foreign university student without power (Smyth & Holian, 2008), current members of staff potentially struggled with my researcher role. Inquisitive militias could also be critical. These identity factors blurred my trustworthiness and my insider/outsider boundaries (Greene, 2014). However, I chose to trust and build a rapport (Woods & Pratt, 2006). I accepted as valid what participants said (Mudavanhu, 2014) without seeking control over their narratives (Riessman, 2008), and held debriefings to verify narratives while pretending to be a naïve listener (Wells, 2011).

##### **4.11.1 Ontological Position**

Ontology is a way of constructing reality and arriving at how things really are or how things really work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). My ontological position was that, in order to understand at-riskiness in high schools, I needed to hear it from children as participants who were experts on their own lives (Kay, Davis & Gallagher, 2009). I had to rely on the participants' narratives in order to understand their perceptions of at-riskiness.

I also believed that children were an oppressed group, despite their contributing actively towards their survival and in shaping the socio-educational environment of Zimbabwe, the world in which they lived (Kay et al, 2009). I faced the disadvantage of not sharing the same ontological perspectives with the participants on possible realities of at-riskiness. However, I

was willing, with the participants, to co-construct the meaning of the participants' world through rigorous analysis of their narratives by identifying themes or by deriving concepts inductively from their storied data (Polkinghorne, 1995).

#### **4.11.2 Epistemological Position**

My epistemological position assumed that there were different forms of knowledge relating to the reality of at-riskiness and the nature of relationships that existed between me, as the researcher, and the participants, and how, as the inquirer, I could learn about at-riskiness from them. At-riskiness could only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who were participating in it (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Since I used the case study approach, only twelve participants were suitable, as suggested by the principle of research sample saturation (Tuckett, 2004). This principle suggests that a case study is driven by the richness of the data and the sufficiency and quality of the data; not the total counts but the detailed descriptions (as in opting for depth rather than breadth), and to stop as soon as the numbers detect information redundancy. There are no hard and fast rules about case study numbers. What matters is the creation of detailed knowledge of the participants' lives created through spending time with a small number of them, interacting and joining in with their activities (Punch, 2001). As narrator, I provided data that met the criteria of: why certain data, what data, where it will be collected, when, how, and how the data will be analysed (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

#### **4.12 SUMMARY**

This chapter has outlined how I listened to the participants' narratives right from the beginning, which I continuously did as I analysed the data in parallel with data collection for thematic patterns from coding.

The first stage involved reading and rereading transcripts over and over again. I began by analysing the first interview with a line-by-line analysis, which involved close examination, phrase by phrase and even sometimes single words (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 72). This stage increased my familiarity with the texts, phrases, sentences and ideas used by the participants. This was the initial step of thematic analysis, which is said by Sandelowski (1991) to comprise

four stages. These are: i) individual and group narrative of life stories or particular life episodes; ii) the conditions under which one storyline and signification of events prevails over, coheres with or conflicts with other storylines; iii) the relationship between individual stories and available cultural stock of stories; and iv) the function that certain life episodes serve in individuals' employment of their lives. I used this framework as a background to my probing during the second and subsequent interviews, where I used the why and when style of questioning.

#### **4.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented data collection and analysis plan for this qualitative case study research. Also examined here was the justification for my design and the narrative inquiry approach. I further presented the biographical context of my experiences as motivational but also as both advantageous and disadvantageous in my insider/outsider researcher role. The data collection methods are explained, in addition to how the issues, data credibility and the case study as a qualitative data analysis methodology are presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a detailed presentation of the results of the research interviews on the narrated experiences of a selected group of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District in Zimbabwe is given. The narrative method of analysis is used to identify themes and meanings arising from (N=12) participants' related life stories about their school careers and family situations of educational at-riskiness based on evidence from my two sampling inclusion criteria: a high absence record (i.e. once a week, according to the class register and/or a high frequency in the school punishment log book); and/or repeaters. Background information relating to each participant is given. This is followed by a presentation of the themes. Each participant's information is discussed in terms of demographic characteristics as they relate to the potential for at-riskiness. Subsequently, all the themes from different participants are grouped into categories of themes, as discussed in the methodology chapter.

#### **5.2 BACKGROUND TO THE NARRATIVES AND THEIR SETTINGS**

Below are short summaries for the interviewed participants.

##### **Mary**

Mary was aged 18 and lived in a household consisting of her single and unemployed mother, her grandmother and her siblings. Mary was a repeater and was sampled because of her regular absenteeism and for often absconding from lessons after daily morning registration. Mary described the family status of her household as poor and said she had caring responsibilities over her siblings and grandmother in the absence of her mother, who usually traded 70 kilometres outside of Chitungwiza. Mary's grandmother could help but, when her asthma attacks were severe, Mary needed to be around and offer care until her mother returned; usually after several days, if not weeks. Such periods left Mary as the main person in charge of the house.

### **Portia**

Portia presented with a highly-disrupted education due to her family's repeated home changes related to what she suggests as her parents' unstable marriage. This insecure home life translated into her itinerant life with corresponding school changes. This was because her parents had a complex relationship. Portia was therefore unsure whether she would still be in the same home or school by the end of the examination period and she stated that this had been the case relating to all her education. With a household membership of 7 and a birth position of 4, Portia had household responsibility chores that included looking after the young ones and preparing meals. Her parents had an on/off relationship, which worked perfectly when all was well but then those periods would suddenly end with the father leaving to stay with his other wife in Highfield. Often, all forms of support would be immediately suspended. The mother ended up resorting to taking on additional work, and Portia and her siblings did what they could to help. This included increased chores and participating in buying and selling in the township, thereby affecting school attendance.

### **Chena**

Chena was aged 18 and had witnessed domestic violence before an acrimonious parental separation with the father moving out. Chena remained attached to her father even though he lived elsewhere with his new family in the same suburb. Chena lived with her two younger siblings and single mother. Her mother survived through buying and selling, like most adults in Chitungwiza, and this kept her away from home most of the time. Her mother also frequently went to South Africa and Zambia to buy and sell, which left Chena with a lot of childcaring responsibilities. At school, Chena was a confirmed repeater with a high absenteeism record.

### **Godf**

Godf's parents never married. He was the third in a household headed by his poor single mother. He had repeated Form 3 after falling ill for much of the third term in 2014, but felt confident with his health now. Godf's mother bought and sold women's traditional medicines and cooked foods at different shopping centres, including Chikwanha town centre and Huruyadzo. Godf had twin younger half-brothers aged 4, who did not attend school. Godf took turns with his elder sibling sisters to take the twin half-brothers to his grandmother's home in the neighbourhood before school. This sometimes challenged Godf, particularly when he woke up too late to then be punctual for school. Rather than get punished in school for coming in late, he often decided to stay at his grandmother's for the day or loitered with friends outside school

waiting for a chance to sneak in between lessons. Often, he stayed away altogether. Godf joined his elder siblings during weekends at the nearby abattoir on Chitungwiza Road to buy cattle feet, heads and entrails for preparation for their mother's mobile kitchen.

### **Kudzi**

Kudzi was a double orphan, who had lost both parents while in Form 3. He now lived with his widowed maternal grandmother, described as 'very old' by Kudzi himself. Kudzi's earliest memories included his father quarrelling with his mother and the father trashing furniture then storming out during those episodes of anger. He also remembered supporting his father with drinks and medicines when the father became ill shortly after his mother's death in 2014. He had no idea what his parents suffered from, and, along with his sister, Kudzi moved in to live with their grandmother and six cousins in a household of nine people. Kudzi had absenteeism issues and repeated Form 3 after dropping out in July 2014.

### **Kalal**

Kalal was 18 and a confirmed repeater, who also had absenteeism issues. He had disrupted school attendance through changing homes with his mother. The household totalled seven people. Kalal neither achieved school bonding nor achievement of a network of relationships with peers and teachers, and practised the avoidance habit of visiting the toilet to get away from the boredom of sitting through lessons. Kalal also absconded and went loitering in the school grounds and corridors and then in the township. He would get back home at the usual time as if he had had a normal day at school. Sometimes, he simply stayed away altogether.

### **Siphi**

Siphi was a 19-year-old girl with a high record of absenteeism. She had returned to education after dropping out earlier due to the failure of not being accepted for the family's first choice of a boarding school. This coincided with the deterioration in the family's financial situation. However, Siphi's family had remained intact, with a working father and a formerly financially active mother, to make a total of six household members. Siphi described her family as poor and that her father had not been paid for months. He worked during the day for a neighbouring city council and rushed back home to work as a builder within the neighbourhood. Siphi also contributed financially by looking after her siblings and raising family income through buying and selling vegetables and eggs on the streets of the township.

**Shar**

Shar was 19 years old and lived with her mother in a household of five: three siblings, two of whom were older, and a younger brother. Shar had caring responsibilities for her young brother. She also had a high absenteeism rate as a repeater after doing poorly in 2014 in her Form 4 final examination. Shar said she sometimes had to stay at home to look after her brother when no one else was there. Shar was burdened by loneliness, participating in working for the household income and sibling care. She often got up early in order to buy items for resale.

**Daisy**

Daisy was aged 18 and the third in a single-mother-headed household of eight. She was included in this sample for her high incidence of absenteeism. Daisy had caring responsibilities and was challenged by the lack of adequate school items from her struggling mother.

**Much**

Much was aged 18 and male. He was the first in a family household of five where he was also the first born. Much presented with high class absenteeism and was retaking this class after doing poorly the previous year. He had never met or heard from his father and had no idea what had happened to explain his lack of knowledge about the father's whereabouts. Much described his family as being very poor.

**Tonde**

Tonde was a double orphan aged 19. He lived with his elderly grandmother in their household of eight and had absenteeism issues. In his earlier childhood, Tonde had witnessed domestic violence at home between his now late parents, who had passed away while he was still in primary school. He had also witnessed them both being ill for long periods of time. Tonde was repeating Form 4 because he had failed to raise the examination fees.

**Gerry**

Gerry was aged 18 and had lost his father in accident at work. He had been excluded from a school in the neighbourhood of the affluent suburb of Waterfalls and was retaking his Form 4 class. According to the school head, Gerry had absenteeism issues, which he denied. He travelled 18 kilometres each way by minibus to and from school in Chitungwiza. Gerry lived with a single mother, his brother and sisters in a household of seven.

From the foregoing summary, I explored similarities and differences and how they worked in given contexts or sets of circumstances, particularly sets of social relations of my interpretive and investigative logic, in order to build a convincing analytical narrative based on my evaluation of general patterns as well as individual patterns (Mason Sa), for example, most of these participants came from single unemployed mothers.

Below, I present and discuss the findings according to my research question: What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe according to a qualitative inquiry using narrative interviews?

### **5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK STUDENTS IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF CHITUNGWIZA DISTRICT**

#### **5.3.1 Lack of Financial Capital**

There are two main issues here. The issue of affordability in this narrative depicts financial incapacity or lack of financial capital. Second is the lack of house ownership, which also correlates to the first issue of financial incapacity. Siphi's family was the only exception in that they owned a house. The rest did not own homes but were tenants occupying only one or two rooms and seeking to share when they had visitors:

*We rent two rooms but, when we have visitors, I can use the landlord's lounge (Kudzi).*

*We only rent two bedrooms and use one as a kitchen but in reality that is the children's bedroom. Mother and grandmother use the other one for their bedroom (Mary).*

*We rent one very big room. It is the size of two ordinary bedrooms. We then divide it by raising a curtain to split it into two separate rooms at night so that with my young brothers we can sleep in our room separate from my mother and the girls (Godf).*

*We use two rooms outside of the main house. I have no table. We only have four stools. The rest of the family normally sits on a reed mat (Tonde).*

The above confirms that these participants had the typical poor's housing problems and overcrowded living conditions (Driscoll & Nagel 2008), which are not conducive to required spaces for homework. Overcrowded conditions were immensely stressful for the entire family and worse for school-attending children, who had no storage for books and papers, no table or surface on which to work and no quiet area in which to read, and this made keeping up with school work extraordinarily difficult (Mortimore 2010). Living in these overcrowded conditions, where a family shared one bedroom, is highly stressful for children, posing immediate threats to their welfare, well-being, mental health and their childhood itself (Long 2015). Probed further, Kudzi responded:

*If my grandmother was still more physically able and employed formally, she would not have struggled with us like she does. It's worse because my mother left nothing for me. Grandmother would be more able and perhaps even own a home or afford to meet these frequent rent increases without changing homes.*

Kudzi expected an inheritance from his late mother, who did not leave one. Further, disadvantaged students became aware that lack of family home ownership increased their housing-cost-induced poverty (Tunstall, Bevan, Bradshaw, Croucher, Duffy, Hunter, Jones, Rugg, Wallace & Wilcox, 2013) and unstable living conditions. Without stable living conditions, educational access was affected: "...transfer into another primary school," Mary explained. This was almost similar to Portia's experience when she said:

*I attended many schools because we changed homes. Mother always wanted me to attend school within a walking distance and I moved to a few schools before my Grade 7 school.*

This was a poor educational start because the participants faced the risk of never bonding, which resulted in always feeling lonely, outcast and alienated, without any real friends (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

### 5.3.2 Nomadic Schooling

Although I did not ask about pre-school experiences, four participants started their narratives right from pre-school before introducing their brief primary school narratives:

*Mother says I started with pre-school. It was natural for me because my mother says at the time we lived next door to a house that was converted into a pre-school. It became convenient for me to attend. Yes, for some time...I am not clear how long for though (Gerry).*

*I started with pre-school (Mary).*

*I started in pre-school. We lived in Zengeza 5. Some years ago, before my Grade 1 at Zengeza 5 Primary School (Siphi).*

*Yes. Twice. For a few months each time then stopped to wait for Grade 1. I had to stop. Mother says she could not afford it once we changed home (Portia).*

Portia's narratives hinted about the non-affordability of education due to financial constraints which caused her to stop. This therefore suggests that Portia started her education with the potential for dropping out right from start, "since my mother could not afford the required fees." Non-affordability of education in Zimbabwe echoes UNESCO's (2010/11) observation that education was the responsibility of local Zimbabwean communities. Families raised funds for their children's schooling and this was not easily affordable for unsettled poor families, as narrated by Portia.

While all children had the right to education (FMSI, 2011), access was dependent on the family's capacity. Poverty among the parents of some families may have also discouraged them because Zimbabwean education was confirmed to suffer from an acute shortage of qualified teachers and the costs to parents in light of the high poverty rates and the absence of free or low-cost schooling (Makokoro, 2015). The inability to access pre-school was confirmed as a future handicap in educational readiness, effects of poverty on school readiness and low parental mother supportiveness during parent/child interactions (Isaacs, 2012).

Changing from school to school was not unique to Portia but was also experienced by Kalal, who moved from school to school and across provinces:

*We changed homes and I was all over the country. I even stayed with my aunt in Harare then Dad lost his job. Dad could not afford suitable lodgings for us. When my aunt relocated to Shamva, I was enrolled at a nearby village school. My uncle then came in during my later primary school years to continue in Mtoko. He was kind but his wife had differences with my mother, who had now settled in Chitungwiza. Mother took me back towards the end of my Grade 6; then my father passed away. I have been with my mother since. Since secondary school, I have changed schools after changing home because my mother cannot afford the new increased rent. My school attendance continues to be disrupted through the changing of homes (Kalal).*

Peripatetic school attendance affected both male and female students, as in Kalal and Portia's case, who experienced this right from the start of their schooling. The at-risk students experienced a nomadic, itinerant or unsettled life, as confirmed by Kalal above, who attended four primary schools in both urban and rural areas of Harare, Shamva, Mtoko and Chitungwiza. During those educational disruptions, Kalal stayed with different relatives:

*I have not seen my aunt and most of my relatives from Mtoko since the time my mother took me back (Kalal).*

This illustrates that the nucleus family's lack of protective factors increased at-riskiness through family isolation and is another factor of the nature of family relations dynamics. It was a disadvantage for Kalal to be influenced by a situation where his mother manipulated his potential to develop a good relationship with the aunt from Mtoko; part of his necessary socio-cultural capital. This has increased loneliness among urban-based children stranded within a neighbourhood with whom they have no family bonding compared to what is generally common among Zimbabwean rural-related communities. Standards of living in urban areas have made it difficult for traditional leadership structures to respond in ways perceived as adequate, such as regular visits to traditional village communities to enhance and benefit from

strong links with rural relatives in a structure that traditionally provided safety nets for children (www.worldbank.org [Sa]).

The current urban family set-up reduces the circle of a potential social capital protective support network. This is a weakness of these unique urban-based families, such as Kalal's, because such family situations limit the socialization process for children. The main social capital of the family comes from the relationship between parents and children, and then from the relationship with other adults close to the family so that the absence of these other adults causes a structural defect within the family, and this limits the children's success in school (Rodríguez-Sedano, Aguilera & Costa-Paris, 2009).

This probably explains Kalal's enduring impact of failing to become friendly with others, even in his current school. *"It just makes me feel they don't like me at all. All of them,"* he says, referring to both teachers and other students. Studies by Schwartz, Moynihan, Stiefel and Cordes (2015) confirmed the negative activities and psychic costs of changing schools. The authors assert that the disadvantages arose from adjusting to new routines, adapting to new physical space and loss of social capital for students like Kalal, and that this could decrease student performance due to a disrupted peer network, school culture and possible curricular mismatch (Schwartz et al, 2015):

*I think changing homes and schools potentially disrupted the formation and enjoyment of successful schooling and the building of strong relationships possibly permanently up to now. I struggle with making friends (Kalal).*

Bergin and Bergin (2009) explain this in terms of the attachment theory, whereby the experienced home-school instability is mirrored into an inability to build secure attachments with teachers, causing achievement of lower grades lasting into adult life. Most participants, however, concur that they lived within Chitungwiza although they had relocated from area to area and had changed schools, as confirmed by the following narratives from Portia, Chena and Godf:

*I have lived in different sections of Chitungwiza since childhood. We never really stay for long in one house (Portia).*

*I understand we have never owned a home and just move in and out of different places within Chitungwiza, if the place is cheaper and peaceful (Chena).*

*My family has always moved from house to house, particularly if the rent is high or the home is not peaceful. Mum says our longest stay was in Unit D where we stayed for four years in the same house (Godf).*

There was a possible link between repeated home and school changes to explain the possible failure to become interested enough for school bonding or the achievement of a network of relationships with school peers and teachers (Bergin & Bergin 2009). Hence, the likelihood of absenteeism or truancy, poor focus, tending to be disruptive and wanting to be in control, as may be detected from Tonde's explanation:

*Reading for a long time was not easy for me. I do still find it hard, even now. I usually ended up asking to go to the toilet.*

This may also be due to other causes, such as a short attention span, also consistent with the possibility of being caused by a learning disability. I chose to become flexible from exclusively relying on interview data, as in this case, because I doubted if I was collecting enough data (Hoda, Noble & Marshall, 2013). Tonde clutched a few poorly-looked-after, dirty and dog-eared exercise books. I then asked if he minded me browsing through these books. My suspicions were confirmed: the books contained very little poorly done or half done work. Notes were incomplete with very poor spelling, illegible writing and whole sections missing. Tonde explained: *"I still need to fill these gaps in once I get the time and the textbooks."* When I asked whether he found repeatedly going to the toilet helpful or not, he said that it *"gave him time to get away from it all because sitting there was boring."*

The current urban family set-up reduces the circle of a potential social capital protective support network. This is a weakness of these unique urban-based families, such as Kalal's, because such family situations limit the socialization process for children. The main social capital of the family comes from the relationship between parents and children, and then from the relationship with other adults close to the family so that the absence of these other adults causes

a structural defect within the family, and this limits the children's success in school (Rodríguez-Sedano et al 2009).

### 5.3.3 Unstable Secondary School Education

Instability in educational access extended beyond primary school for most at-risk students. Participants experienced the same disadvantages from primary school, such as the challenges created by failure to secure close attachments both in the community and school, “*due to accommodation instability and parental irregular incomes*” (Portia).

In addition to moving from home to home and school to school, Portia said:

*Some of my earliest memories in secondary school included the challenge of having many teachers coming in and out and also having to move over to the lesson rooms.*

Bergin and Bergin (2009) also confirm this by suggesting secure teacher–student relationship formation was more challenging in secondary school because, at that level, students spent less time with a single teacher. Gerry commuted daily from the middle-income suburb of Waterfalls. He did not perceive the distance/transport factor to/from Chitungwiza as a disadvantage. Initially, he said:

*I am happy here because I was at a worse school previously and I feel very comfortable in this school. All I now look for is stability so that I can sit my examinations. I would not even think about transferring to a different school and never even contemplated going into some of the best schools within the neighbourhood of my home in Waterfalls. I am fine here.*

Having to travel long distances to school/home often increased the potential for students to travel possibly through or into the most violent neighbourhoods, the most murderous sections of the city, through new and often more dangerous routes, and crossing dangerous intersections into unwelcoming schools (Lee, 2014; Long, 2015). However, Gerry contradicts this observation and maintained that he felt safe going to and from school. As I probed further on a different day, Gerry revealed:

*Actually, I did not transfer from the previous school but was expelled. It's sad really because it is located virtually next door to my home. All because I was silly and did something wrong. I am so angry with myself for the inconvenience caused to my mother. I do not want to think about the circumstances...It will not happen again.*

I stopped the interview to ensure his cooperation without provoking distress. Giving inconsistent responses was probably because Gerry may have lacked emotional stability as a result of the incident (Harris & Brown, 2010). Gerry had then agreed with his single mother that he was a reformed person and would never be at risk of expulsion again. The current school was his last chance and he vowed to make good use of the opportunity. Getting a place in this school, he says was not a problem:

*It is known you will always get a place here. This is where all of them come (Portia).*

In their words, the participants stated different reasons but none admitted to misbehaviour to explain why they had changed schools. Commonly cited reasons for moving from secondary school to secondary school were family disadvantages experienced following a family member's death, illness, unemployment and searching for cheaper accommodation. As for choice relating to the two schools, the participants were clear:

*My school never turns anybody away because it is never full at all (Tonde).*

*It's well known that this school will always take you in. I did not want to waste time moving from school to school but just wanted to use that time to settle and get started (Gerry).*

*I had no real choice. My father wanted me back in school as soon as possible. This school never stops enrolling (Siphi).*

Moving from school to school did not help either in promoting a sense of belonging, but established loneliness. The apparent perception clear to both headmasters was that such students lacked the interest to learn. This was probably also the perception of the teachers who

observed and categorized students. Hence, the headmasters picking on these students for my sample, which proved accurate because nearly all participants, as also alluded to by Bergin & Bergin (2009), showed evidence of being insecure, failing to explore freely and socializing with other students, except for Gerry and Siphi.

*I have many friends, yes. I enjoy mixing with both my teachers and fellow students here. I even miss my classmates from my previous school (Siphi).*

*I have good friends in this school. Maybe because I sometimes play football. Yes, football makes it easy to get friends (Gerry).*

*I just get fed up with other girls (Gerry).*

Mary, like Tonde, responded when probed for her perception of personal attachment/socialization-related issues. The second response from Tonde was “*I prefer to be on my own*” but it was not clear if this suggested low levels of self-esteem or that he was an introvert. Tonde and Mary did not see the way they related to other students and teachers as a necessarily missing component of a broader learning skills package. However, their socialization limitations were consistent with the findings of Alloway, Gathercole, Kirkwood and Elliott (2009), whose study suggested that students showing either low levels of self-esteem or vulnerability needed constant support and encouragement.

#### **5.3.4 Poor Time Management Skills**

Tonde did not view repeatedly going to the toilet as a time-wasting habit against his learning focus. In his narrative, he suggested the reason why he repeatedly went to the toilet was because he felt bored in class. Being bored in class or abandonment of tasks due to feeling overloaded is also characteristic of learning disabilities (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008). Tonde was not the only one with the tendency of walking away or withdrawing from tasks both at home and in school situations:

*Yes, I would rather go out to the toilet than sit through a boring Maths lesson. I do not have any friends as such and I do not have a favourite teacher either. They all hate me like when I forget some formula like they*

*ask you to work a Maths problem on the board...I can't do it. I don't remember things or know how to go on with it. It's too much (Kalal).*

The link between inattentiveness and memory is said to depict working memory failure behaviour due to overload, and Kalal says he typically started an activity and then either began to make errors, forgot or abandoned the task (Alloway et al, 2009).

### **5.3.5 Livelihood Challenges**

Kudzi, a double orphan, faced the challenge of livelihood and *“fees when my father died.”* Again, as in primary school, transport challenges remained a persistent problem at secondary school. Some students lived far from school. The death of a breadwinner was considered a big challenge by Kudzi. This caused him to absent himself from school and he ultimately incurred additional educational costs, such as transport and *“failure to secure bus fare as life changed for the worse.”* His life was further complicated by his grandmother's poverty, resulting in the household living in overcrowded conditions without personal space for Kudzi to do his homework.

### **5.3.6 Disadvantageous Domestic Roles**

Siphi had transferred into her current secondary school from a boarding school due to *“an outbreak of strange behaviour”* alleged to include Satanism and lesbianism. This was corroborated by Mushanawani (2013) when he stated that some students were excluded from Lydia Chimonyo Girls' High School with effect from 3 September 2013. Siphi regarded this transfer from a boarding school into her current school as very disadvantageous. The boarding school had been her first choice because *“the environment helped me to grow and become independent.”* Once in the current school, Siphi had to *“do a lot of work before and after school in the home,”* which she says left very little time for any homework. Khazan (2016) also observed that too often girls were burdened with household chores, cleaning and cooking at the cost of opportunities to do homework, and also had a long way to walk to school:

*Walking a long way to school made me tired. That was why I was usually late and occasionally absent from school (Siphi).*

*I go a long way and my route was not served by public transport (Mary).*

Long distances to school affected students' performance (Ngeno, Simatwa & Ayodo, 2012). Similar experiences were also confirmed by Mary:

*I fetch water from the neighbourhood where there are boreholes since we don't have running tap water, cook and also take care of my grandmother in the absence of my mother. My grandmother has bad asthmatic attacks and, in the absence of my mother, I look after her and ensure food is ready.*

*I find it hard to participate in sport after lessons (Siphi).*

This was concurred with by Ashville (2016), who observed that, compared to boarding schools, day school students did not have time for fun and to form intense friendships to remember for life. Shar further added:

*I need the time to rush home, start on my daily chores, such as looking after the home, washing, ironing and preparing supper for my family of one little brother, a single mother and two sisters, who are always away at work, leaving me with the burden of looking after my brother.*

This was also the experience of Portia, Chena, Godf and Shar. These girl-child household chores were consistent with observations made by Luebker (2008) on gender responsibilities where girls worked anything from one to nineteen hours in unpaid domestic work, such as housekeeping and caring for other children and the sick. Siphi's mother would be off as soon as Siphi arrived, if not earlier, for daily sales rounds as a "cosmetics hawker in the township till late or early morning." This preoccupation with home responsibilities left little time for Siphi to do her homework. She did not expect her mother to help her because her mother was never home. Shar also had similar experiences and added:

*My mother never has the time to attend school meetings. She has never read anything to me as far as I remember. We rarely have much to do together because again my mother does not stay home. It is like either I am home with the child or my mother is home with the child and never are*

*we together at home. My sisters too are never home. When alone with the child, I watch TV while doing my work and cooking, and have meals with my little brother then sleep. When Mother returns, she finds us asleep and early morning I come to school while Mother sleeps. By the time I return home, Mother will be gone and sometimes both or one of my sisters will be home but often I am by myself. This has been our life.*

*Over weekends, I leave home by 5.30 a.m. to buy vegetables, eggs and sometimes green mealies from the vegetable market at Chikwanha then resell them on the streets. I do this when things are really bad to raise extra money when my mother and sisters are struggling too much with money for soap, food and rent (Siphi).*

This narrative testifies that the at-risk children cared for their siblings and participated in household income-raising activities. The data concurs with Temah-Tsafack (2014), who stated that many other urban children in Zimbabwe had an even worse urban environment experience since they lived and worked on the streets where they were vulnerable to many risks and abuses as they carried out these vending, if not begging, activities. (Ibid) further noted that the situation of these at-risk children was actually heterogeneous, ranging from children who lived with their families, as in the case of these participants, and living on the street without family ties, and no access to basic rights fulfilment, as in shelter, dignity and protection.

The above narrative highlights concern with loneliness among the at-risk children. They were in social situations where parental and sibling socio-economic struggles isolated them in a process which denied them full psychosocial development. Biglan, Flay, Embry and Sandler (2012) argue that children needed to grow under the care and support of significant adults for the inculcation of the nurture role to promote the development of positive psychosocial behaviours. Experience of loneliness due to lack of opportunities to interact with other significant adults exposed children to feelings of lack of safety, positive self-evaluation and control in terms of values and morals (Biglan et al, 2012), to help children develop the capacity to learn how to cope and tackle difficult situations and challenges in life.

Further noted in this narrative was the fact that Chena, Siphi and Godf were actively involved in the labour market earlier than others (Kallio, Kauppinen & Erola, 2016):

*I help with roadside selling of vegetables. Whatever is available for sale when I must help. What can I do? (Chena).*

*I sometimes also sell stuff for my mother but often moved from house to house chasing payments from my mother's favourite clients (Godf).*

In addition to confirmed participation in hidden forms of employment (Bourdillon, 2009), they carried out unpaid care work for their families. They also did not receive sufficient attention to their health and education (Bourdillon, 2009) because they split the time spent at home to look after siblings, cook and attempt to do their homework. In addition, they confirmed supplementing household income (Harsch, 2001) by:

*...waking up early to go to buy vegetables, eggs or second-hand clothes from the wholesale market for resale on the street to help get some money for the home when things are really bad at home (Siphi).*

### **5.3.7 Lack of Parental Support**

This mother/child relationship confirms an earlier observation by Lutz & Jayaram (2015), who stated that some parents had no engagement with their children's homework because they lacked the intellectual capital for homework engagement. It may also be the case that such mothers lacked the intellectual capital. Such a status was criticized by Becker and Hecken (2009), who believe that it made students fail to aim and maintain or have the motivation to work for their educational success. This was concurred with by Graaf and Kalmijn (2001), who also observed that the lack of cultural capital at home, in addition to poor and few cultural resources, leads to lack of educational success (Buis, 2013). This was further confirmed, as follows:

*I don't get any help with my homework from my mother. She has never helped...saying she is too busy or too tired. I am not sure if she would be able to get the time to help me in the future (Mary).*

*My situation makes me feel disadvantaged when I compare my current educational situation to my former boarding school. We had time to do*

*homework and were never asked to sit by the roadside to sell vegetables (Siphi).*

Indeed, Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles and Wilson (2014) observed that the three most important considerations in school choice against disadvantage are academic quality of the school, its socio-economic composition and the home to school distance.

*This school has a reputation which is a further disadvantage in this suburb for behaviour. Yes, now there seems to be an improvement but it is still not attractive when compared to Zengeza 1 or Seke 1 High School. People believe this school has poor grades results, student misbehaviour and teacher misconduct (Siphi).*

*My school is not anybody's first choice. It has an unattractive image within this community. They only come here because they have failed, want to repeat or have been excluded from their first-choice schools (Godf).*

### **5.3.8 Standing of the Household**

My data confirmed that all except one female participant came from broken families, as confirmed by the following responses on questions about membership of the family unit:

*My parents never married (Godf).*

*I have never seen my father home (Godf).*

*They separated (Much).*

*My mother and four siblings only. Our father is dead (Kalal).*

*It's just my mother. No. My father lives with another woman and left us on our own (Chena).*

*They divorced then Dad passed away shortly after. I have two brothers and a small sister (Gerry).*

The above suggests that the at-risk students are disadvantaged because they come from characteristically single-mother-headed families, who in 2013 were nationally at 35 per cent of all Zimbabwean households (ZimStatistics, 2013), but more were represented in this sample for different reasons that include never married parents, death of the father, separation, the high

number of family members and an unemployed or informally employed household head (ZimStatistics, 2013). The higher levels of poverty among children from mother-headed households corroborated other international data (Morrissey, 2013; www.unstats.un.org, 2010). These universally-confirmed characteristics in my data contradicted the unprecedented (ZimStatistics, 2013) assertion that Zimbabwean male-headed household family poverty characteristic levels were sometimes higher than female-headed households.

My data also confirms that the two schools' samples had two participants from two-parent-headed families:

*I live with both Dad and Mum (Siphi).*

*My parents live together on and off. It is really wonderful when my father is home but pretty miserable on the day he leaves for Highfield. He then does not want to have anything to do with us until he returns (Portia).*

The fact that participants such as Portia and Siphi were included in this sample suggests that household headship was only one of the factors of at-riskiness. While the majority of the participants were from a single-household head, children with both parents could also be educationally at risk. This seems to suggest that the most significant issue behind educational at-riskiness appears to be family employment status. As such, the prevailing complex overarching contracted socio-economic environment adversely affected all children from working-class households, irrespective of household headship, gender or employment status.

Further challenges faced by at-risk students were the loneliness caused by the orphanhood/absence of their guardians (confirmed to be almost always away, out looking for work, in rural areas or on long trips to Zambia, South Africa, Mozambique or across the border into Botswana for petty trading or to buy essentials).

*I feel very lonely when Mother is away and Grandmother is very ill. More so when Mother has not returned on a day she promised. At the moment, Mother has been gone for nearly three weeks. She said she was going to Bindura but, with no phone, I just wait till she knocks on the door. This is hard (Mary).*

Such periods of loneliness resembled unintentional virtual child-headed households and was confirmed by Mary, Chen and Godf. All children under such living conditions faced the challenge of high-risk behaviours under which they could be easily exploited, isolated and discriminated against because their living environments were unsupportive or unhealthy (Datta 2009).

*I am aware because my classmates tease me about that and even adults from my neighbourhood often joke about that, but I do not do such things. My only worry is my making sure I have prepared food and everybody, especially Granny, are alright (Mary).*

In their words, Mary and Shar confirmed staying with single mothers or some other relative. This was at various stages and during different educational periods. The participants who were brought up by single mothers did not always have a guaranteed comfortable upbringing, as can be inferred as follows:

*I do not always celebrate my birthday. Mother cannot afford it (Mary).*

*I had a second-hand school uniform sometimes (Shar).*

*...often got sent home over unpaid fees and levies in the past (Shar).*

The potential for staying with a single mother was triggered by a few reasons, including bereavement, divorce or separation, and all the reasons had the potential for causing at-riskiness through increased chances of falling into poverty because lone parents continued to be among some of the most disadvantaged (McHardy, 2013). This is also echoed by Main and Bradshaw (2014), who concluded that families of lone parents with three or more children were at a greater risk of poverty and social exclusion with a poverty rate of 80 per cent. For this sample, exposure to the disadvantage of poverty and at-riskiness was further confirmed by the fact that half the participants from both schools had at least one living parent while still in primary school.

Further concurring with these participants' perceptions was DeAngelis (2012), who confirmed that the at-risk students could be further prevented from doing well in school because of being overworked or because of absent parents, as in the case of Mary.

The fact that children without parents or with just one, even if for recurring periods, was disadvantageous was not in doubt and caused far-reaching effects on affected children. When the father is not home most of the time it negatively affects the offspring's economic and social-emotional well-being throughout life in all areas, including education, mental health, family relationships and labour market outcomes (McLanahan, Tach & Schneider, 2013). Such children often experienced prolonged periods of shortages of essentials.

### **5.3.9 Exposure to Domestic Violence**

Among some of the earliest memories mentioned was exposure to domestic violence by Chena and Tonde:

*I still remember seeing my mother crying after being pushed or slapped by my angry dad. That happened a few times, yes just before Dad left us on our own as he went to live with his new wife. On a number of occasions, I would arrive home from play or school or even wake up to see my parents in the middle of a heated argument or actually fighting. Or my dad would be hitting Mum and usually Father shouted at the top of his voice to my crying mother (Chena).*

*My father and mother often had nasty arguments and real fights (Tonde).*

Asked if these two participants ever told their teachers about this violence, they replied:

*No, I did not (Tonde).*

*Not at all (Chena).*

Tonde and Chena stated that their parents eventually separated and, for Tonde and Kudzi, both parents died. UNICEF (2006) claims that children who are exposed to violence could show

signs of emotional problems in the future. That was further confirmed by Liu, Yu, Zhen, Zhang, Su and Xu (2016), who observed that children's exposure to parental conflict could be linked to their school engagement. Chena says she "*indeed had trouble with school work, and showed poor concentration and focus*" but, contrary to Cunningham and Baker's (2007) claims that children from a violent parental relationship could be denied a good father and positive male role model or could view their father as an abusive, self-centred and manipulative authoritarian with little involvement with their children, Chena says that she:

*...definitely still enjoy an excellent relationship with both parents. I remember the violence and the fact that Father later moved out to go to live with his new wife in another area of the same suburb, leaving us with Mother, but I am very much attached to my dad, and even his new wife loves me. When I need money and my father is not at his home, I will ask the wife; she just gives me it if she has it. When she says she doesn't have it, I know she is right so that even if Father were home, he wouldn't have given it to me. They all love me and I love them.*

Chena's position suggests that not all research conclusions apply to all individuals, and at-riskiness requires case-by-case analysis.

### **5.3.10 Indebtedness of Parents**

Data indicated that urban poor families were burdened by debt due to increased income challenges in a shrinking economy. Most of the at-risk students' parents had no jobs, with some having been laid off for a long period of time. Others lost employment due to company closures or bankruptcy, and were now finding it difficult to obtain regular weekly work for a decent family income (Chopamba, 2011). As a result of the need for survival and meeting daily living costs, most families found themselves heavily trapped in debt. The following narratives confirmed indebtedness and some of the needs causal to the debt status:

*My mother owes several people some money (Chen).*

*...heavily in debt for money she borrowed to pay my fees and uniforms (Siphi).*

*Mother borrowed because my dad had stopped paying maintenance money for food (Kalal).*

*...got some debts for broiler chickens she borrowed for our Christmas (Kudzi).*

Indebtedness among working-class families was also confirmed in the UK where Tomlinson and Walker (2010) noted similar characteristics of recurring cycles of indebtedness among families where the household head had limited education, was a skilled manual or lower skilled worker or was a single parent with unemployed and economically inactive people. They reiterated the latter two factors relating to how the socio-economic environment increased at-riskiness even if household heads wanted to avoid indebtedness through employment or viable informal employment. Chiumia (2014) dismissed the high government rates of employment variously stated as more than 60 per cent, 85 per cent and 95 per cent as unreliable. This data concurs with Chiumia's (2014) assessment, which also confirmed that the at-risk families (according to data from these participants) have very irregular means of income, are struggling financially and are heavily in debt, trying to manage just the basics for their children's education. They borrow because they have no opportunities for employment in this cash economy, where one has to buy all commodities and services, and this requires paying for them (Temah-Tsafack, 2014), which presents big challenges if there is an emergency needing payment.

### **5.3.11 Inability of Families to Meet Unexpected Expenses**

Participants confirmed that the families of the at-risk students could not meet almost all of their everyday costs. This situation was worsened by sudden family emergencies, such as sickness, death and accidents in the household. The following examples illustrate how impoverished families failed to meet sudden costs:

*When Granny died, my mother borrowed from the Post Office for her part contribution to buy the coffin with her sister and brother. Yes, if something went wrong suddenly, usually my mother would just have to borrow. That is why Mum owes a few people some money, including our landlord to who Mother's bill is in arrears over electricity, water and rent. The bills have*

*been in arrears for some time now. But not owing our landlord is a good thing because that also ensures we will not be chased away. You see? (Mary).*

*My parents have been struggling. Even though Dad is a builder part time after work, his clients never pay him in one lump sum for him to use the money effectively. He spends a lot more time chasing them long after the project, and even then they pay in drips and drabs after a lot of pushing sometimes. When I needed examination fees, my parents could not raise the money easily without borrowing (Siphi).*

*I failed to raise examination fees last year. If I broke my leg, for example, I would not be able to pay for an X-ray, or if sick, I wouldn't be able to pay the doctors' fees or get treatment at the private Southmead Hospital where one can get nurses and doctors for treatment. The government-run Chitungwiza Hospital staff are often on strike for pay. Besides, the long queues and periodic strikes by the doctors and nurses will only make one stay at home (Kudzi).*

The above narratives confirm that the at-risk children accept that they come from poor families and, because of this, they are worse off. Most deprived urban children are poor because they live in poor families (Temah-Tsafack, 2014). The inability to pay for medical care exposed the children to a myriad of ill-health problems and forced them to enter into the highly-exploited labour market, resulting in their inability to continue in education (Datta, 2009). Of those fortunate at-risk children who continued attending school, Nyambedha, Wandibba, and Aagaard-Hansen (2001) stated that they could not concentrate on education because they were hungry and/or malnourished. This data suggests that Kudzi was aware: *“I cannot pay for treatment in Chitungwiza if I suddenly required treatment like in an accident.”* This means that, although the facilities are close by for the at-risk children in urban areas, the conditional payments only affordable by the socio-economically advantaged barred the poor and made health delivery and services not accessible to all (<http://unstats.un.org/> 2016).

Further issues relating to confirmed deprivation are the inability to access tap water and resorting to borehole and shallow wells at the risk of catching waterborne diseases, such as

typhoid and cholera; outbreaks of which the participants remembered clearly from when they were in primary school:

*The whole area has no tap water for long periods of time and I get up early to queue in the neighbourhood for a bucket of water from any who have sunk a well (Mary).*

*Although we have a well at home, sometimes neighbours are there first before we fetch water and will have to wait. It's not only water but we also need to get firewood and cook outside. That is not easy when it's wet outside. Our area is always without electricity (Siphi).*

*We used to have sewage system leakages but that has improved significantly since the period of the cholera outbreak and that it is now repaired promptly whenever there is a leak/blockage. There used to be cholera outbreaks risk (Mary).*

*I do not even think about fashionable clothes like other students in my class. Yaah...feels uncomfortable sometimes (Siphi).*

### **5.3.12 Inability of Parents to Meet Basics Accessible by Age Mates**

This data confirmed that some of the at-risk students accepted the fact relating to lack of money in their families and their parents' inability to pay for some fashionable items, including phones. The following narrative confirms perceptions relating to the lack of financial capital:

*Yes, only my elder sister, mother and father have mobile phones. What do you mean, me having a phone? Where will I get the air time credit? It would be nice if I had one. You are joking! I have never had one and wish I had (Siphi).*

*Indeed, we have a colour television. But the player is not working. Both were bought second-hand by my elder sister some time ago from an electric repairs shop (Shar).*

*I have enough blankets, I think. I have three plus a quilt but I do not have a bed. I sleep on the floor on a mat and, when it is too cold, I use Mother's old sleeping bag. That keeps me warm in June (Mary).*

McGreal (2008) sums up the true cost of family characteristics of Zimbabwean poor urban families when he says, "The true cost of living in Zimbabwe – no food, no job and no hope." Participant families have no hope, are content with second-hand furniture and, unlike other children, do not have mobile phones. The children are aware that the use of a mobile phone also requires additional credit costs, which they do not have. They say:

*I do not have a bedroom to myself (Mary).*

*I share one room with my mother (Chena).*

*I share a room with my small brother and sisters (Much).*

*I do not have a reading room but use the kitchen and also usually share the same room with occasional visitors (Mary).*

*I do not have a bed but lay on a reed mat when doing my homework and sleeping (Kudzi).*

*The longest time a visitor stayed with us was about a year and that was my cousin, who was looking for work (Gerry).*

Also from these narratives was communicated the idea that, because of the families' unstable lives, a bed would be difficult to squeeze into one room operating as lounge, kitchen and bedroom for five people. Two participants had access to the landlord's kitchen sometimes. Other items needed, but done without, included essentials, as follows:

*Both textbooks and exercise books, spare uniform, pencil and mathematical sets (Much).*

Furthermore, acquiring enough furniture would be challenging on the day of moving home. The at-risk accept that their families may not afford certain items that others have but have resignedly accepted their status and therefore do without due to the lack of various forms of capital.

### **5.3.13 Lack of Socially and Progressive Network Capital**

This data confirms that all the participants, except for one, lived in a socially deprived area of Chitungwiza. Their narratives confirmed lack of social capital because of everyday exposure to forms of at-riskiness:

*I live in St Mary's. It is the oldest section of Chitungwiza and most people are unemployed. I have a few friends who are unemployed and I see them after school. Some play football on the streets while others do buying and selling. None from this school has been to Zengeza 1 or Seke 1 for A-Levels. I don't know of anybody doing an apprenticeship either (Kudzi).*

Socially deprived residential areas lack social capital for school-attending children to identify and propel positive personal development towards one's ambitions out of the cycle of poverty.

Godf and Kudzi's families did not own the homes they lived in but "just rented a room or two" in the poorest sections of Chitungwiza, where they attended two of the worst schools. They all lived in rented rooms within areas known for drugs and crime, such as "St Mary's, Unit D and Unit P." Godf associates with somebody close to an ex-prisoner:

*One of them has been to prison but he is not quite a friend of mine. Just somebody; a friend to my friend from Unit D. None has been to college or university; just guys from local schools with a few O-Levels and nothing else. I have no proof though that they actually have O-Level passes. I know they were in school and some were in this very school (Godf).*

Godf suggests that the person who went to prison is not a close friend but that they moved around together with known unemployed youths and school dropouts involved in some of the township violence and drug culture and gaining notoriety. This failure to confirm being

personally involved in crime or being personal friends may be some defensive normative response. Those students associating with township gangs were putting themselves in situations where they lacked meaningful connection with positive role models (Bluestein, 2012). Declining personal association with township gangs could be a case of participants trying to abide by normative thinking to prevent my judging them as gang members:

*I have some friends who used to attend this school, yes. They are now unemployed and hoping to go to South Africa if they get passports. They sometimes get piece jobs like loading sand or bricks...nothing special but just for a few cents or dollars then that's it....and every day (Godf).*

Both Godf and Kudz stated that they engaged in some form of trading in order to supplement the family income:

*I personally just do some food resale (Godf).*

*Due to lack of employment in my family, I have no choice but have to rely on what everyone else is doing...go to the Chikwanha market and buy for resale. It however can be risky, like if you go to Chikwanha too early in the morning when nightclubbers are still around or if you are still around late into the evening. But that is when we make good money...selling to patrons who are hungry from work before they start drinking. Sometimes they will ask us to roast meat for them. That too is well rewarded if one is lucky. These drunken patrons make this place unsafe for our sales. They don't care if you are a girl or not. The later it is the more behaviours they exhibit because it will be darker, and the more they will be drunk (Kudzi).*

The above confirmed that participants carried out sales in areas which they knew to have high-risk behaviours even though some among them were girls, with potential for exploitation, working in isolation in these unsupported or unhealthy township environments (Datta, 2009). They knew of many more students from their school and other schools who were in similar situations of buying and selling on the streets.

While carrying out their selling, they stated that they witnessed street violence, swearing and drunken behaviour, including public nudity and indecency on the streets of shopping centres, such as Huruyadzo, kuGomba, Zengeza 2, St Mary's and Unit D. They all concurred that, among the many challenges of street selling at these centres was the fact that the places did not all have public toilets for these young street sellers, who had to be there all morning if not into the night:

*There are no public toilets at Chikwanha and I just do what I have to do. I can't build one for myself, can I? Once in a while, yes people fight or say rude words to you. I do however often leave early. The worst happens after sunset (Chena).*

*Rowdy behaviour was an everyday occurrence and tended to worsen over weekends when alcohol consumption would be at its peak, and the only way I can avoid violence is leaving early. Otherwise I can't leave these places completely...that's where the customer is for my stuff. The same customers do display behaviours but they are the same I target for my food sales (Chena).*

Although none of the participants confirmed repeat personal absenteeism from school, they confirmed knowing somebody who was in the habit of repeated absenteeism for no other reason than joining other youths loitering in the townships. In fact, for all the misdemeanours, it was somebody they knew and not themselves. This may be due to the nature of the behaviours they chose to talk about, which were all negative. Such characteristics were, according to Bluestein (2012), indicative of the influence of living in neighbourhoods that lacked social capital, which affected school performance, depicted a dislike for school, and resulted in poor attendance and the potential to involve oneself in petty crime, drug experimentation and even dropping out of school.

#### **5.3.14 Acknowledged General Behavioural Issues**

In one of the schools, participants confirmed a general dissatisfaction with their school due to what they saw as low standards in their education.

Although the other school was of the same exam performance category, the participants were not dissatisfied with their school. All participants at School B were unhappy with fellow student behaviour and receiving punishment:

*The results here are the worst in Harare. Some students don't take teachers seriously at all because all that some teachers can do is punish more than teach. They come to punish students all day and never teach at all (Shar).*

*This school does not make us pass. Yes a few students may have behaviour issues like lateness, absconding and not doing homework and fighting but we don't have books. We feel like we are wasting time, then find what else we can do like talking or getting out of class. All they do is punish students (Daisy).*

*There are no books. We are given homework without books. Teachers don't listen but just punish students, who are unable to do homework because there are no books. We explain when we are asked why we didn't do homework (Tonde).*

*Teachers are always sending students on punishment for talking in class. Some talk because they can't read without books. Some students walk up and down the corridors and endlessly making noise, disturbing others. I don't give teachers problems (Gerry).*

The participants felt that other students were a problem, and none among them believed that they had behavioural issues, and denied being on punishment. With regard to participants denying involvement in behavioural issues, this was difficult to probe further even though I certainly had asked for behavioural concerns to be included when the headmasters sampled the participants. However, participants talked about other students and clearly indicated that they were aware that mischief led to expulsion and difficulties later in life. School A participants were concerned by the level of student drunkenness and the use of drugs within school grounds:

*Some students never learn despite the expulsion of other students last year (Godf).*

However, generally, both groups of participants confirmed that they did not believe that they belonged to the best-behaved students in Chitungwiza. Even though they agreed that School A had better behaved students, School B was now much better:

*There were times in the past when police intervention would have helped. Discipline needed police here ... though it now has improved and keeps improving (Tonde).*

In School B, student behaviour “*had improved because of the new deputy head, who is a well-known no-nonsense professional man*” (Siphi). He came in to replace a “*problem teacher who was not concerned with student behaviour, learning and disorder*” (Gerry). Observations of teacher improvement indicated for some of these students plans about the future.

### **5.3.15 Life Aspirations**

Siphi, Godf, Much, Kudzi and Kala aspired to become fully employed after school although there was a difference in the stages at which they would want to start work:

*I want to look for work maybe as a businessman soon (Kudzi).*

*I want to become a soldier (Siphi).*

*I will join the army. I want to be a soldier (Godf).*

*After school I will become a soldier (Much).*

Some wanted to start soon after their O-Level results and work in government “*as a soldier*”, except Gerry and Tonde, who wanted to go on to do their A-Levels and then university to work as an accountant and a teacher, respectively, after university.

Besides hoping to have a career, there was a clear goal to own some property: “*I will buy a car for my mother*” (Siphi). However, all wanted to relocate from this suburb, “*to a better place like a low density suburb, relocate from Chitungwiza because people do drugs here. I will buy a home and stay in Avondale*” (Siphi).

This perception suggests that the at-risk students grow up alienated from their suburb and want to escape from it, as in the expressed perception that they:

*Will live a...need a different life* (Siphi).

*I want to go away from this...from this struggle...low level life of Chitungwiza* (Tonde).

*I can't stay here once I start working. This is not a beautiful place. I want to own a beautiful home and stay quietly in the suburbs with my mum* (Mary).

Asked why they were keen to move out, the answers varied, but included:

*Because I want to live quietly* (Tonde).

*I will be earning enough to live away from all this* (Siphi).

This possibly suggests that participants believed that only those who did not earn enough to afford better homes and all those who could not afford anything better, i.e. the poor, lived in Chitungwiza:

*“People like my grandmother”* (Tonde).

There was, however, a consistent desire to move out with and look after their parents, brothers, sisters, and so on in a different place from Chitungwiza. This thinking confirmed the Zimbabwean cultural norm of supporting one’s family members, particularly one’s parents, and not because they were necessarily wealthy.

Nearly all participants also believed in change, not only in terms of relocating but conforming with societal expectations of marriage as soon as they were established. This was evident in the following:

*Will live with my parents and siblings (Siphi).*

*Will get married to an educated wife (Gerry).*

*Will have two children (Siphi).*

The most aspired-for job was ‘in the army’ probably because a fair number of soldiers lived in Chitungwiza. Confirmed by participants aspiring to be soldiers was the fact that “*soldiers are always paid on time, unlike teachers*” (Much).

## **5.4 SCHOOL-RELATED CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS TO AT-RISKINESS**

### **5.4.1 Teacher and Material Shortages**

The comparison between the two schools clarified that School A participants did not have as many needs as School B participants. Participants from School A were generally more positive with regard to their teachers, classrooms and the whole learning environment. In School B, the participants were not all happy with some of their teachers, classrooms and the general school atmosphere. Given choices, School B participants would generally want most of their teachers replaced but felt powerless to influence such a decision. The following quotes illustrate this:

*I do not like most of these teachers but do like the new Mathematics teacher. This Maths teacher who started here in January is great but he is the only one. We need another one (Mary).*

*We need an extra Maths teacher to teach Form 1 so we don't share this one with juniors. Yes, we can do with an extra Mathematics teacher and maybe if the rest could be transferred and some of them even fired. This Maths teacher does not spend time shouting at students. He is overworked and would be more relaxed if he did not teach so many classes (Tonde).*

*He is overloaded. Too much work to do. Marks all books and returns them.  
He is often late for lessons because students from the previous lesson will  
continue to ask questions and that takes up time from the next lesson  
(Mary).*

School B participants were happy with their Geography teacher as well. He made himself easily understood and was “*professional*” (Siphi). On the negative side, participants’ issues were that they did not feel satisfied by having only one teacher for each of the subjects of Agriculture and Building. The participants’ view was that there needed to be different teachers between junior and senior classes:

*Teaching all classes was overworking these teachers (Daisy).*

School B participants felt that the school had less learning resources, as can be seen from the following participants’ observations:

*We have a shortage of textbooks in all subjects. These are not supplied  
except for General Science, which we got plenty of from a donor (Siphi).*

*We need more chairs and desks. Look, this is falling apart (Godf).*

Textbooks were also confirmed to be in short supply for all subjects except Science, according to Much and Siphi, who both confirmed this on separate occasions. These two as learning educational needs resources are also confirmed by OECD (2014: 13-14) when they state that students need time to learn and participate during and after school activities. Time shortage as a learning resource is confirmed as compounding at-riskiness when added to text book shortage in schools, as also confirmed by UNESCO (2016), who highlight the relevance of textbooks for improving learning outcomes where there is also a shortage of instructional time.

Only two tests since Form 3 were in Tonde’s Geography exercise book, where he had scored 11 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively. The volume and quality of work were not different in his Mathematics and English Language exercise books. They all showed very poorly done work in an illegible or illiterate handwriting made worse by splashes of ink, hand-drawn lines, crossings-out and squiggles.

Participants from School B were not happy with the physical school resources:

*As you can see, we've got missing window panes. Down there is an empty block of six classrooms and not operating ever since it was built some ten years ago...been standing there since 2006. Classrooms are not adequate but the Ministry is not decisive about that block. All we hear is that there are negotiations and endless negotiations over the unutilized block. They do not explain what exactly is wrong about that block (Siphi).*

Indeed, there was a full block of six classrooms which were all locked up:

*I do not understand why parents were asked to build this block of classrooms in the first place....Then we are not allowed to use all this extra space. These classrooms were obviously built for our learning purposes. This does not make sense at all (Siphi).*

A further concern was:

*The school does not have specialized rooms for specialized subjects such as Science laboratories and classrooms for Fashion and Fabrics (Kudzi).*

One participant in School B also noted that the school head had no office:

*Head has a storeroom for an office. There is no administration block here but a classroom which is doubling as a reception and deputy head's office (Godf).*

At a personal level, these students did not have material needs that enabled comfortable educational access, and the following are their comments:

*I usually do not have any pocket money (Shar).*

*I carry some cooked food with me to school sometimes (Siphi).*

*I need a good pair of uniforms complete with shoes and socks. I have outgrown my skirt and top at the moment (Much).*

The above resources shortages in Zimbabwean secondary schools are consistent with Gwembire and Katsaruware (2013), who highlighted the need for adequate educational material resources, such as textbooks and teaching aids, workshops/workrooms, tools and consumables. The physical conditions and organization of schools facilitate or inhibit construction of a culture of success (Fonseca & Conboy, 2006).

Both schools did not have special feeding programmes for their students. School A operated a two-shift school session every day with the first from 7.30 a.m. until 1.30 p.m. and then from 1.30 p.m. until 5.30 p.m. In School B, students were in school from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Students brought their own food into school from home, and this was not a school request.

*We are not asked to bring food at all but it is up to the individual to sort that on their own (Tonde).*

*I sometimes bring food but also bring in a few coins to buy food. It is not a school requirement, though. Teachers are not bothered (Kudzi).*

*If you don't bring in your own food, you will find it hard to go through the day so I bring my own...sandwiches or fruit, or whatever...even some money (Kalal).*

It was up to the individual student to ensure that they had some food. All students had access to tap water. Outside each school gate were several women selling various foods, including popcorn, sweets and buns. They also sold bottled drinks. Some had fruit like oranges, roasted mealies, avocado pears and sugar cane, all displayed on plastic and hessian material on the ground. I wondered whether this was not a possible source for disease and asked one student about my fears. “*There is such a possibility,*” an unidentified student confirmed with me in a conversation as we passed the school gate. He further mentioned the fear that “*there is potential for food-borne diseases, such as diarrhoea,*” as also observed by Jonga and Munzwa (2009), who noted that this situation could exacerbate the incidences of cholera, typhoid and other

diarrhoeal diseases since these sales points were in open spaces and neither council monitored nor inspected. My sample participants also confirmed this, as follows:

*“I know that they do not have vending licences from the Council but what can I do when hungry? All I can do is ensure I buy my food from one who looks smart” (Godf).*

Some of these foodstuffs were kept in buckets and baskets. Students were seen buying from these vendors between lessons since both schools were at a distance from the nearest shopping centre. The students were, however, aware that the school did not allow them to buy from the vendors but, because the vendors occupied spaces which were outside the school grounds, it was not possible for the school to fully control students’ buying choices. The school had no student control outside the school grounds.

Another recurring theme relating to participant needs was the shortage of school uniforms, books and pocket money, as highlighted in the following extracts:

*I have always used very worn uniforms while in this school because my mother takes time to get me a new set and all the time she keeps saying she does not have any money at all (Much).*

*I do not have a full set of books and sometimes borrow from friends or the Geography teacher (Siphi).*

In general, most participants confirmed walking to school since they lived in the neighbourhood of both schools. Although Mary and Siphi also walked to school, this was not easy due to the lack of a direct link between school and home by public transport. Gerry had no choice and commuted on a minibus daily from Waterfalls:

*My additional need is bus fare. I get that from my mother every day. So far, bus fare has not prevented me from attending school. My mother just manages this for me.*

But, like the other students mentioned above, Gerry added:

*I do not always bring home-prepared food to school. On those days, I rely on the ladies outside school.*

I reflected on whether some children tried other means and if so how each child tried, if at all, to raise their own pocket money outside the family-sanctioned activities and legitimate work, then probed to find out if there were any experiences of such other means for raising pocket money:

*Many, yes, engage in some type of gambling like King and Taylor, Gerry confirmed but denied personal involvement.*

*It appears there are some students who do (Mary).*

*I am aware that goes on from what is said about it. I have not seen anybody involved though (Portia).*

*It looks like there are some boys involved (Chena).*

*Yes, there are some who play betting games here (Godf).*

*That is an everyday thing if you check behind there (pointing) at lunch break (Kudzi).*

*Definitely. Yes (Kalal).*

*I often see some boys play money games at break behind the toilet block (Siphi).*

*Last week, the head talked about some students wasting time playing King and Taylor. I have not seen anybody though actually doing that (Shar).*

*Yaah, particularly boys from Form 2, yes (Daisy).*

*Some boys play betting games at break time. They also sometimes do that during private study time (Much).*

*Yes, some students do (Tonde).*

Although the above confirms acknowledgement of the habit of petty gambling, none of the participants personally admitted to the temptation of considering other means of raising money. However, they were aware that some students raise cash for whatever their needs were, by playing the game of King and Taylor. This was consistent with a study carried out by Rossen, Clark, Denny, Fleming, Peiris-John, Robinson and Lucassen (2016), who observed New Zealand students, whereby one in ten students had gambled, with the practice being in significantly greater proportion for males than females. In this data, only boys were suspected of being involved.

#### **5.4.2 Teacher Drunkenness**

Student at-riskiness in one of the two schools also resulted from what participants said was “*teacher drunkenness*” (Tonde). Although the students mentioned this, they were quick to say this was only evident among two teachers, but significant in that it ever happened anyway, and one of the students actually named the teacher:

*Mr X often came for lessons smelling of alcohol (Shar).*

Asked what they did about it and whether they felt safe, these participants said:

*He was transferred. I am not sure whether it was because of that. He was well known here but nothing was ever done to him for years (Shar).*

This was contradicted by another participant, who also confirmed drunkenness in the same teacher but also felt that:

*He was not a big problem, as he knew his stuff. He did not come drunk all the time as such (Gerry).*

There was a lack of consensus on whether the second teacher came to work drunk. Among the three who mentioned this was one who said, when under the influence, the teacher:

*...did not speak normally, eyes looked red, lost focus of the lesson, could talk about football forever and showed a bad temper, shouting at us for no reason... ” (Shar).*

Another narrative relating to the second teacher was irreconcilable with the first participant’s narrative on the second case of alleged drunkenness because this participant said of the same teacher:

*He was asthmatic and struggled sometimes (Gerry).*

*There is nothing like that. Some students here are in the habit of saying anything about teachers. I don’t believe there was a teacher drunkenness problem ever (Shar).*

*If that happened, then it was before my time (Gerry).*

### **5.4.3 Teacher Absenteeism and Hostility**

The participants perceived teacher absenteeism in their schools to be a directly contributing factor to at-riskiness. Most students agreed that teacher-repeated absenteeism was rife. Those who believed teacher absenteeism was a problem further stated that it could take the form of teacher absence from school for periods ranging from a few days to a few months for whatever reason, including sickness. They also perceived other forms of not-so-much-talked-about disguised teacher absenteeism, whereby the teacher was in the school but could be away for a few minutes at a time ‘attending meetings’. This category, according to participants, was evident through the teacher coming in late for the lesson, “*leaving us alone*” or “*without work*” (Shar) for periods of the lesson or talking about irrelevant subjects, such as football or politics, during lesson time, or focusing all their lesson conversation on particular individuals of the class, such as favoured “*beautiful girls*” (Siphi). A few teachers in one school were known for coming in late all the time when coming from ball games into a classroom-based lesson.

When asked if they ever challenged this teacher absenteeism, the participants said that the particular teachers with this habit were always “*very hostile and unfriendly*” (Kalal), and the participants would not dare question them, which confirmed lack of care among some teachers.

#### **5.4.4 Lack of Teacher Planning**

Another perceived contributing factor to at-riskiness was the apparent lack of teacher planning. Participants felt that it was clear at times that known teachers with this habit could be seen struggling with the sequence of their lesson. This was confirmed in one school by five of the six participants:

*You can see this teacher is struggling (Siphi).*

*Spend the whole period talking about football. That’s silly...just because there is no work planned for the lesson.... (Shar).*

*Used to have a very confusing Maths teacher. That has changed now. At the time I used to hate Maths. It doesn’t work when the teacher can’t present an organized step-by-step lesson. I get lost (Daisy).*

*I don’t like it when a teacher comes in late. Talks about football...Mr X. He loves Dynamos and thinks everybody is aware they played well last Sunday. He will go on and on talking about Dynamos. When Dynamos lose a game, Mr X will be very angry Monday morning. It’s so funny! All it means is they have not planned for us. I get angry (Much).*

*I don’t like it when the History teacher takes us through endless talk. Waffling, yes, wasting time (Tonde).*

*I like it better when a lesson is planned. You can see the teacher is not confused when you ask a question. They have an answer for you straightaway. I sometimes see confused teaching in History...he talks irrelevant issues. Confused (Gerry).*

*One day we were told to forget about what he had last taught us as he now wanted to teach us the correct method. This particular teacher will then dwell on the same topic for some time as if he feared to move on with the syllabus (Shar).*

#### **5.4.5 Lack of School Resources**

Participants from School A were happy with the quality of their resources and actually bragged that they attended a school where *“the classrooms are tiled”* (Much). Indeed, the school had just been tiled and a borehole sunk. School B participants perceived the lack of school resources as causal to at-riskiness, and I was taken to see some of the problems to evidence narratives on resource shortages. The participants from School B all confirmed a perceived relationship between resources and the quality of the education they received. They complained that they had a full block of six classrooms ‘over there’, indicating that we should get up and have a look around.

As we walked around this block of empty classrooms, Much explained:

*The block is nearly ten years old but has not been used because of a pending approval issue by government. That was why the whole school was then crammed into the approved six classrooms. We do not have an administration block.*

I had earlier confirmed this for myself upon my arrival to seek permission for data collection. Much’s perceptions confirmed what I had earlier not expected these participants to worry about at all. I could see that in School B that there was no administration block. I reflected that this was a weakness on my part to be prejudicial by not expecting certain answers as in this case regarding perceptions of the administration block and learning spaces. Much’s views were clearly verifiable and he was unarguably right to state:

*The headmaster uses one storeroom for an office...that is only accessible via our English Language classroom.*

During this interview, the headmaster was hosting potential contractors for some future construction work. Further, the school reception also used another storeroom, which was only accessible through the next classroom. The deputy head used the third storeroom office only accessible through another classroom, from where I witnessed him running some national examination registration.

Much further complained that:

*While lessons were in full learning session, visitors to any of the administration personnel would knock, come in and out and present their queries while the teacher was teaching.*

*This is very disruptive. Such visitors included sometimes very noisy or irate parents, who came into the school to make complaints (Chen).*

During the interview period, there was a daily queue of external students who were registering for the November examination. These candidates were continuously streaming in and out, and confirmed the perception of the participants that their attention and learning was continually being disturbed.

Not only did this school lack an administration block and adequate classrooms but:

*There are no laboratories for Science or specialist rooms for technical specialist subjects like Agriculture or Fashion and Fabrics. See, the classrooms have broken windows, missing door handles, broken blackboards, and half the furniture needs repair. Look at those loose seats. Most of these chairs have no backrests...some have loose seats...then....add these people popping in and out disturbing us (Much).*

Such disruptive free movement in and out of the classrooms and the quality of buildings are elements of the school climate confirmed to play a mediating role in the relationship between facility quality and student achievement (Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008). This was also corroborated by Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013), who argued that well-maintained school environments were reliable predictors of a better student sense of

ownership, greater care of buildings and better performance. It may therefore be inferred that the prevailing state of disrepair and neglect in this school had the undesirable possible effects of increasing at-riskiness through alienating students into lack of ownership and subsequent poor performance. The physical conditions and organization of schools facilitate or inhibit construction of a culture of success (Fonseca & Conboy, 2006), which is essential for supporting at-risk students:

*Except for Science, we have very few textbooks in all other subjects. I am happy with the teacher to student ratios (Much).*

This however also corroborated the issues relating to low enrolment in that the school had places for anybody looking to join any class due to high dropout rates and unpopularity rather than from well-planned strategic concern with quality. However, not all was negative. Siphi had positive perceptions relating to changes made in the English department:

*One of the English teachers also doubles as deputy head and was effective in turning round both discipline and the school's past reputation for failure.*

While Siphi is appreciative, she hints at shortages in the above by using the phrase “*also doubles as deputy head.*” This becomes clearer when Siphi reveals her concern about shortages and teacher quality:

*It worries me that the whole school has only one teacher for Agriculture and no second competent teacher for Mathematics.*

## **5.5 AWARENESS OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOUR BY AT-RISK STUDENTS**

### **5.5.1 Girls Blamed for Teacher/Student Sexual Relationships**

Participants confirmed male teacher/female student affairs in a stereotyped way, blaming girls for initiating sexual advances rather than accusing male teachers for their power superiority over the girls. When probed how these came about, participants did not view themselves as powerless in those relationships but believed “*It was girls who threw themselves at teachers*

*for the teachers to notice” (Siphi). This pliant feminism was often understood by these participants as being an effort to attract males when all these girls were trying to do was simply to become ‘trendy’, according to Aikman, Unterhalter and Boler (2009).*

In my sample, no participant alleged having had the personal experience of these observations relating to male victims of female teacher advances. This contradicts Shakeshaft (2013) and Rufo (2013), who alleged that females perpetrated abuses on male students. The participants concur that if the girls did not “*start it with reassurance to the teacher that nothing would go wrong, the teacher would not follow it up because the teacher obviously did not want to lose his job*” (Siphi).

That sex predators manipulated the situation was confirmed by Salter (2012), who observed that actually these abusers were protected by their victims, parents refused to believe the accusations, authorities discounted the reports, communities supported the predator and the juries acquitted the suspects. The perception of these participants was that students lured male teachers through smiles, pretended they needed further explanation by asking many questions and got too close to the teachers. Asked how exactly the girls who initiated this hoped to benefit, two participants suggested that some girls wanted money or higher marks, with the girls establishing the relationships through:

*Arrangements for extra lessons (Siphi).*

*Revision lessons and exam coaching in and out of school (Mary).*

*One student I know gets pocket money (Daisy).*

*Small gifts, money and exercise books (Tonde).*

### **5.5.2 Awareness of the Need to Abide by School Rules**

A few more participants presented the following evidence in their personal characteristics, causing some of them to be at risk:

*Caught taking alcohol in school (Chen).*

*Suspended for coming to school with beer and some hot stuff (Godf).*

*Threatened the prefect after getting caught stealing from someone's bag (Kalal).*

*Accused of smoking marijuana (Shar and Gerry).*

*Caught fighting (Tonde).*

A few students were caught consuming alcohol a few times in School A's grounds and were eventually expelled because they did not want to give it up. The participants who presented these characteristics were careful enough to simply state that:

*It was also rumoured that some students took marijuana. I have not yet seen anybody; have not actually witnessed this being done on our school grounds. I asked the other day why some boys were on punishment and Chris said they had been caught taking drugs. Chris too did not say he saw them take the drugs but, like me, only saw them on punishment (Gerry).*

*I can tell when somebody is drunk, particularly the group of five. When one of them has consumed alcohol, he undoubtedly looks very suspect from his looks when drunk. He says he drinks the traditional brand called Super. They then swear at teachers, look for trouble and fight in the school grounds on our way out, get sick in corridors and play truant from lessons as they loiter outside, and generally they become a real nuisance to fellow students and teachers (Kudzi).*

When asked what led some students to start drinking alcohol and behaving in a rowdy way early instead of concentrating on education, Chen replied, making reference to various issues including peer pressure and a weak socio-cultural capital base:

*It could be due to several reasons. They can avoid lessons and just wander about because of anything really, including a dislike for certain rules from teachers, like do your corrections first before new work, harsh*

*teachers, hard subjects and classmates who laugh at you when you make a mistake. In this school, it could be because that's how some students always behave and some students want to play with their friends in a group. Also maybe because they don't have parents or maybe their parents just don't care and never discourage their children from certain behaviours and habits.*

*Some parents do not care (Siphi).*

This reference to social and cultural capital was concurred with by Kainuwa, Binti & Yusuf (2013), who stated that parents could have a worldview which could promulgate the philosophy that hindered children's personal growth and restricted them as students from experiencing true life, whereas other parents could free their children by preparing them to mature into their destiny as good influences or not-so-good influences (Kainuwa et al, 2013).

*When in Form 4, some just cannot make right choices. Some people need to remember and take care what they choose. Personal choices are important in guiding emotions and behaviour so that one will not end up always trying to blame their parents or friends in decisions which resulted in expulsion. If you come to school drunk, you are exposing yourself. If you come to school smelling or carrying alcohol and drugs, you will get it...always punished by exclusion from this school. Simple (Portia).*

The above suggests that students from both schools were aware of the need to abide by the school rules if one hoped to stay until the end of the final examinations, but this may be another example of a normative response when a participant responded:

*I think using drugs can lead to personal future problems. Drugs can make one bunk lessons. That leads to eventually failing. A girl can be raped when drunk, get diseases or fall pregnant. Last week we were taught about failing to be careful because one is drunk and they can get HIV (Siphi).*

In another interview, some students also condemned drugs and alcohol relating to one's personal character building:

*Alcohol and drugs are not good for me. They may affect my behaviour in school. The hangover after drink is bad for my behaviour and health. I don't want to be an alcoholic later in life or got to jail because of depending on drugs and alcohol then maybe commit worse crimes (Gerry).*

In this discussion it is clear that participants are aware that drugs and alcohol affect one's behaviour and can lead to a life of crime or disease. The participants are also aware of the particular school contributing factors, as narrated in the paragraph on teachers' strikes.

This data suggests that the participants' perception of previous "*repeated teachers' strikes*" (Gerry and Siphi) exacerbated the participants' at-riskiness. While "*not all teachers went on strike at the same time*" (Gerry) in both schools, Portia's observation was that "*whenever a teachers' strike started, too few teachers attended for work, except the non-teaching head.*" Wills (2015) concurs with this concern and states that Zimbabwe teacher strike-related absenteeism totals an average of three days per year. This is in addition to other teacher discretionary absences (Raegen, Miller & Murnane, 2007), at an average of twelve days a year due to illness, injury, family member's illness, family member's injury, funerals (family, colleagues, friends), medical appointment(s), bad weather/road not accessible, official business (for example, meetings, examinations and courses), maternity leave and security reasons (riots and civil disturbance), according to Wills (2015):

*They don't come on time if they decide not to (Chen).*

*On strike days, teachers came to school late or not at all (Tonde).*

*Not quite prepared or in a state of motivation to give all they normally could (Gerry).*

*This was always evident for the duration of the strike period and some of us got confused and discouraged (Daisy).*

Wills (2015) concurs with the participants' concerns in that teachers' strikes detrimentally affected student learning since a student's performance in a subject taught by a striking teacher

was approximately 10 per cent of a standard deviation lower than his/her performance in a subject taught by a non-striking teacher. Finlayson (2009) concludes that, the more days a teacher is out of the classroom, the lower their students tend to score in standardized tests.

Student performance was one of the few measures of teacher effectiveness, as confirmed by Miller, Murnane and Willett (2007), who condemn high rates of employee absence, which they view as signalling weak management and poor labour-management relations, and in agreement, Sipi, blamed the state:

*Teachers don't earn much. The government must listen when teachers ask for a little more. It wastes our time. Boys will spend the three days playing football and sometimes fighting and running around doing nothing.*

This further triggered absenteeism among students who saw no point when “*the few teachers who come to school were late or not in the best of moods to teach*” (Tonde), according to the participants' narratives. During such periods, School B:

*Experienced a rise in student misbehaviour. Boys especially were...being noisy fighting, harassing classmates, some never turned up as well and nobody marked the register in my class. Some were walking endlessly walking up and down corridors and in and out of classrooms, excited due to lack of teacher supervision (Godf).*

This affected most of the participants because, in their words “*some of us cannot organize work for ourselves*” (Kalal).

*In my school, the worst behaviour that has happened was when some five students came to school drunk late morning. They brought in illicit substances. The headmaster saw a packet of cigarettes through the shirt pocket. He then caught the boy to search his bag. There were all sorts of things in there like more cigarettes, as if they were for sale. He also had many tablets... I don't know what for. When the Head Boy searched the friend's bag, he found a stub of marijuana. The friend then denied it*

*was from his bag. But he also had matches on him. He said it was put in there by the Head Boy. It was an endless argument, then the headmaster sent the group home to bring their parents for a disciplinary hearing. The first two were suspended and did manual punishment. Their other three friends were caned and let in class (Kalal).*

Probed if he had ever been caught with cigarettes or alcohol on school grounds, Kalal said that had never happened but confirmed “*when things like that happen, it disturbs me because some of these are my friends. It is worse when a teacher is away. These behaviours rose when teachers were absent*” so that that teacher absences affected participant learning, and this was confirmed in a study by Keller (2008), who asserts that teacher absences affect student achievement.

In Hong Kong, worsening student behaviour due to teacher absences saw students bringing in electronic devices such as mobile phones for texting people inside or outside the classroom, playing electronic games, surfing webpages and listening to music during school time (Sun & Shek, 2012). In Chitungwiza, some of these students were eventually suspended or expelled for their behaviour:

*I don't think teachers are always absent. During strike days yes but they may have personal problems too or like Mr Y, who comes from far away. It is possible he may not have bus fare on one of the days. These are difficult times for everybody, and teachers are not any better (Siphi).*

## **5.6 RESOURCE LIMITATIONS**

### **5.6.1 Employment Challenges**

According to the above participants, educational at-riskiness was increased by the “*lack of items to use in school*” (Daisy). The following comments elaborated this perspective:

*My mother always says she is not making enough money and promises to get better sales over the weekend to pay for my extra lessons or at the month end, but then she changes and says she has no money at all because*

*of rent....” (long pause by Shar, then I do a non-verbal gesture for her to say more). “I think it only means Mother does not earn enough. She would pay for my extra lessons if the money was there.*

*During the week Mother will always say she is waiting for Dad to send her money because she had a bad day selling. When Dad comes he says he will sort it out by the weekend then sometimes he goes for a long time leaving us without money, and Mother says she is waiting for Dad to buy my exercise books (Portia).*

*How can Mum get the money with also Grandmother to look after? She is not on any income but struggling buying and selling. That is hard. At present I don't have the correct uniform, Shona poetry anthology and a satchel. I have not had revision classes ever since. Asking my grandmother to buy it is unfair... she has no money (Mary).*

*My mum can't afford that. How can she raise that from selling by the roadside where it is crowded by everybody selling the same items? (Kalal).*

*My grandmother cannot afford extra lessons. She is trying enough for us but she just does not make enough selling on the street. If only she was employed maybe she would make enough money. Not at the moment. She is not making enough at all for extra lessons after my fees (Tonde).*

The above suggests that the participants understood that it was true that their parents did not have any income. It also confirms that the parents did not make enough money as mere street sellers because:

*Corn Textiles closed down and there are no jobs in Chitungwiza anymore except street selling (Shar).*

*When I went for Form 1, my father was still doing well. My mother was still buying big volumes of goods for resale and she was making much better then. All that is gone now. She is either stuck at home or buying*

*and selling like anyone else. All her capital was swallowed up in maintaining the home, my fees and supporting Daddy, who has not been paid for a while (Siphi).*

*When I started secondary school, my mother was already into buying and selling (Mary).*

Since the participants had started secondary school, most of their parents and guardians were in the informal sector due to ESAP's lasting effects on Zimbabwe. Informal sector occupations were described as 'poor quality employment' by Luebker (2008). As also observed by Luebker (2008), the participants indicated that their parents and guardians were mostly in informal/enterprise-based employment, whereby the cash income was generally extremely low and working conditions poor. All the participants had informally-working parents or guardians when they started secondary school.

Another challenge to establishing whether these parents were working or not was the redefinition of employment, whereby if one worked for their own consumption then they were not supposed to be counted as being in employment (Chiumia, 2014). I chose to consider the definition used by each participant and then probed to establish if it was registered employment or whether or not to investigate this problem.

The parents of the participants had worked in a local hardware store in Chitungwiza, for Harare City Council, for an ice cream company in Johannesburg and as a driver in Chitungwiza. These job roles had changed as evidence of the precarious nature of the Zimbabwean economy. By the time of the interviews, one of the initially four working parents had died in South Africa. That this father died while working in South Africa confirmed the 'push factors' of the socio-economic meltdown in Zimbabwe; an instability which all participants acknowledged and said affected most families known to them.

Migrating for work into South Africa and elsewhere around the world for Zimbabweans was consistent with McGregor's (2006) observation that the Zimbabwean general 'brain drain' accelerated from the mid-1990s as the direct effects of the neo-liberal structural adjustment policies were felt. Most participants' parents were unemployed and survived through buying and selling various wares. The parents operated from home, footpaths, streets and open spaces,

as also confirmed by Luebker (2008). The products covered anything from car parts, second-hand clothes and mobile phone credit cards to seasonal fruit and vegetables, as well as services, such as gardening and rubbish clearing, as follows:

*My father used to work in a local hardware store but lost his job. I am not clear what actually led to him losing his job but I know he now works as a self-made mechanic doing basics on people who need help with their cars at Chikwanha (Chena).*

*Mother sells stuff on the road and often at Chikwanha, Huruyadzo and the town centre taxi rank (Godf).*

*My father works for the city of Harare. He is now also accepting more part-time jobs after work and over the weekend as a builder all over Chitungwiza at people's homes doing renovations (Siphi).*

*My father lost his driving job. He is constantly in search of a permanent job as a driver. Since losing his job three years ago, he regularly works as a freelance second-hand car parts dealer at Chikwanha. From here, he is occasionally hired as a driver by minibus owners and unregistered taxi owners servicing Chitungwiza and nearby villages and Waterfalls. He sometimes goes as far as Harare (Godf).*

*We also help Mother during the weekends and sometimes during the evenings midweek to sell cooked meat and vegetables anywhere, like at Chikwanha and on the street (Godf).*

*Mother sells second-hand clothes (Mary).*

The above confirmed the flexibility of the informal economy and its precarious nature, as alluded to by ILO (2014), but also highlighted the increased poverty among the informally employed, confirmed by a link, albeit an imperfect one, which created a correlation between informal employment and being poor.

The informal employment that these parents had was certainly not by choice but out of a need for survival in order to access basic income-generating activities (ILO, 2014), which were, however, not the best means for safeguarding educational access for one's children, since informal employment was erratic. Furthermore, coming from a family sustained by the informal sector could be further criticized as creating unsuitable exposure to at-riskiness because it had the disadvantage of creating parental pessimism towards the labour market and lack of positive role models, which increased at-riskiness relating to how it carried implications for how long such children could stay in school (Coelli, 2011; Kalil & Wightman, 2011).

Families with low family resources did not always inspire their children to 'dream big' educationally but to conform to the disadvantaged status or non-mainstream life goals, as influenced by lack of formal employment role models away from the strengths of the education route into the labour market (Kallio et al, 2016). Such children's immediate needs also made them often miss school because they were too hungry and did not have any clean clothes to wear (Thomisith, 2014).

When probed further on forms of income and what their parents did in order to gain income, the majority of the participants stated that their parents were self-employed but they all lacked a common understanding of the definition of their parental type of employment, except for Siphith, whose father was "*a builder for the city of Harare.*" Employment or 'self-employment', as they preferred to define their parental occupational conditions, is defined by standing the test of three characteristics, according to Průša, Baštýř, Brachtl and Vlach (2009). According to Průša et al (2009), the self-employed are independent. Their businesses are governed by law, as in a private company which operates under a trade licence and follows specific legal regulations in view of the variety of areas and conditions of business, which also requires highly-qualified expertise in the trade. Most of the participants' parents did not qualify under these characteristics because of what the participants said their parents did, which confirmed that the parents were mostly street hawkers, who mainly sold different wares at different places, including Chikwanha/Guzha, and also carried out street and door-to-door selling of unspecialized goods. They were dependent on ever-changing products and ever-changing customers. One parent was said to be a motor mechanic but was untrained, and neither was he specialized in any particular area of motor mechanics. He also did not have a stand allocated for his business to abide by local bye-laws but was an active street mechanic.

This same mechanic and the builder had experienced frustration for a long time relating to unpaid salaries, according to the relevant participants. These participants were aware that their parents did sometimes go without salaries for months. The city of Harare, for whom the father of one of the participants worked, was still locked in a legal battle with its workers, who had not been paid, according to Matenga and Mbanje (2015), who had earlier noted the negative impact that unpaid salaries had on workers, who at the time of writing were still to be paid for December 2013, November 2014, December 2014 and January 2015. These claims relating to non-payment of wages were confirmed during this write-up as it was common news in conversations, on the radio and in newspapers, for example, at the beginning of May 2016, the National Railways of Zimbabwe employees had not been paid for more than fifteen months (Zhou, 2016). Siphil's father had not been paid for some time. Teachers had not yet received their bonuses from seven months earlier (Kandemiiri, 2016) and their wages had been repeatedly delayed, which affected their families' and children's daily needs, including educational access.

These salary delays of varying lengths had an adverse effect on education, according to the participants. Their perception was that, as students, they ended up failing to buy essential educational items. One participant's father had not received his wages for five months, and the family had then resorted to surviving on their mother's income earned from cross-border trading in Zambia and South Africa. The mother's whole capital had then been consumed through meeting daily home expenses. This had depleted all her capital, rendering the 'mother hen' redundant and stuck at home. The father had still not been paid ten months on.

### **5.6.2 Required Socio-emotional Support**

The most challenging issue with Tonde and Kudzi was orphanhood, which exposed them to psychological, financial, social and parental support challenges, according to Taukeni (2015). This pair concurred with each other to explain that:

*Coping with life's challenges without my parents was enough of a challenge on its own. I do not always have somebody to share my emotional problems with. Neither am I able to confide in anybody some of my dreams and hopes or frustrations of having no one to buy me school uniforms and books...this poverty (Tonde).*

*I wonder what it feels like to have the joy of just seeing my parents. That is affecting the whole of my school life. I feel very lonely (Kudzi).*

*I only remember my dad from the pictures. He passed away when I was a baby. Yes, I think about him a lot and wonder how life would be different with him around (Gerry).*

Gerry believed that because his father was no longer alive it restricted his future opportunities. DeAngelis (2012) confirmed this perception when he stated that orphans faced significant personal roadblocks preventing them from doing well in school. Participant loneliness was also confirmed by Chi and Li (2013), who linked HIV orphanhood with poorer psychological well-being.

Most of these participants said that they lived alone most of the time, which made them vulnerable. Child loneliness and the link to vulnerability were qualified by Datta (2009), who summarized the challenges as being orphanhood, not living with their parents most of the time and not living like a family but on their own and unsupported in child-headed households and maybe living under the care of a grandmother:

*I am behind in most things because it is hard to manage things on my own. I just do not have the time to get ready for supper, fetch water for the night, get firewood and cook when Mother is away. It's better when Mum is around or Grandmother is better. Grandmother helps a lot but her asthma is the challenge. I then feel very lonely with a lot to do and nobody to help me (Mary).*

*I don't have a table for homework. Our landlord allows me use of his family lounge for any homework but that is difficult for me because that family stays awake almost all night every day (Godf).*

*Not hearing from my father makes me feel very lonely. My mother is struggling (Much).*

*I wish there was support for us from whoever. My grandmother is overworked. There is just too many of us. Nobody ever visits us to help of all my father's relatives. It's just my grandmother (Kudzi).*

That these participants felt lonely put them at increased at-riskiness. The challenge of loneliness increased the risk of depression and anxiety disorders and further raised the possibility of higher-risk sexual behaviour, such as earlier sexual debut, more and older sexual partners and transactional sex (Pascoe, Langhaug, Mavhu, Hargreaves, Hayes & Cowan, 2016). However, the data does not suggest a prevalence of sexuality other than that mentioned relating to some girls who flirted with teachers. Only one participant confirmed witnessing a friend being involved in transactional sex from primary school and had just returned to a different school in January after giving birth.

While none of the participants confirmed losing a parent due to HIV, it was claimed by Pascoe et al (2016) that HIV was prevalent at a rate of 14.7 per cent in Zimbabwe, whereby more than half the population currently lives with the disadvantage of extreme poverty. Current data therefore is not representative of this HIV-related orphanhood-related at-riskiness. However, it may also be the case that my participants decided to conceal their family HIV history since this potentially triggers stigmatization implications within the school among these adolescents at school. Such a possibility then suggests that these participants had that burden of concealing family HIV history as another challenge to bear in solitude for self-protection against stigmatization, which caused further loneliness, peer problems and lower self-esteem in school, as confirmed by Chi and Li (2014) and Genberg, Hlavka, Konda, Maman, Chariyalertsak, Chingono, Mbwambo, Modiba, Van Rooyen and Celentano (2009) when they stated that stigma and discrimination resulted in shunning by peers and the wider community, poor treatment in educational settings, erosion of their own human rights and psychological damage.

### **5.6.3 Inter-Parental Conflict**

Three participants remembered struggling when they were in Grade 7 to get birth certificates so that they could register for the final primary school public examination:

*My father was very angry after my grandmother objected to his intended marriage to my mother because she said he was a thief and therefore*

*unsuitable to marry her daughter despite the pregnancy. Father is said to have then just walked away and never agreed to my birth registration. When in Grade 7, as usual, the school insisted I needed to get one. My mother wanted my birth certificate in my father's name but he was uncooperative and still bitter (Mary).*

*My mother struggled to get my birth certificate because she was expected to bring some witnesses, which required money. Mother has never mentioned to me where my father is. She keeps saying I will meet him one day (Daisy).*

*I have never met or seen my father, and that alone was a big problem for my mother to get my birth certificate. Eventually, she just registered me in her name and that's it (Much).*

An additional challenge over the acquisition of birth certificates for the at-risk was orphanhood, as in Godf's case, when he says that he “*never saw my father. My mother eventually got me a birth certificate in her name after a struggle.*” The disadvantages of paternal orphanhood were confirmed (Gwavuya, 2015) as affecting the birth registration of more than half of the children under 5 in 2010–11, who had no birth certificates for reasons including the age of the child, association to the apostolic faith, carer's educational status, household wealth status, place/facility of birth and province of residence. Godf was not alone:

*My mother abandoned me at my father's rural home for about four months without me attending my Grade 7 class. Mother only came to collect me when she heard that I had fallen ill but still went back to Chitungwiza without my birth certificate. I had to repeat Grade 7 and, fortunately, my father has, since my return to school, been cooperative and active in my life. I got the birth certificate in his name according to my mother's wishes but have continued to live with mum, my two elder sisters and a brother (Mary).*

Mary's narrative illustrates that parental failure to stay together or at least cooperate in jointly looking after Mary triggered a host of disadvantages for her, and she had to go through the

turmoil of being abandoned and missing school then repeating a class. This means that the dearth of protective factors essential for nurturing the essential ingredients required in the development of a supportive environment for the physical and emotional needs of the child is detrimental (Blumenthal, 2015). This causes educational at-riskiness.

While the mother can register her child in her name, the Zimbabwean patriarchal cultural norm requires the father's family name for identity. This created barriers for Mary through the mother's efforts to insist on getting Mary's birth registration certificate in her father's name. The father objected to his potential mother-in-law's opposition to his marriage to Mary's mother. The acrimony between Mary's father and mother demonstrated how protracted conflict between parents can make the child feel that he/she is to blame and is therefore at higher risk of negative outcomes (Mooney, Oliver & Coram, 2009).

Asked about how staying in the rural home instead of attending school made her feel, Mary responded:

*I was angry and felt I should not have been born.*

Mary was an example of how a child can be put in the middle of a dispute (Mooney, Oliver & Coram 2009) and lose a year's education through parental non-cooperation tantamount to oppressive practice against her right to a name, a nationality, an identity, a legal existence, as well as a public school examination; all of which are facilitated by a birth certificate, which further provides full access for any child like Mary to access social, economic, civil and cultural rights which were all affected by this barrier of traditional identity protocol (Gwavuya, 2015; Hopenhayn, Rico & Rodríguez, 2011).

#### **5.6.4 Lack of Minimum Basic Personal Space**

In trying to understand how well these participant families interacted with their extended families, the participants responded as follows:

*I hardly see any of them at all. My mother's sister does pop in once in a while to sell peanut butter but then she is the only one who visits us and*

*stays for a week or two selling. We have no choice but to squeeze in the only space we have when she arrives (Shar).*

*I don't have a personal bedroom. I share. I also don't have a table for homework but just lay on a mat on the floor to do homework (Kudzi).*

*There is my mother's brothers who farm in Centenary. They sometimes come to stay when they are selling their tobacco at the Bokas. A daughter of one of them once stayed with us for over a year looking for work whenever her employment as a domestic worker ended (Gerry).*

*My aunt once stayed with us for two weeks when her daughter was at Gomo General Hospital for a medical operation. That was an exception because Aunt normally comes in for an hour just to talk to my mother then she goes back (Kudzi).*

*We rarely have any visitors at all. Last week, however, we had some old man from the village who slept overnight at home. Although he was welcome to my mother, his visit disturbed us as we had to seek space in the landlord's lounge. I was sent to sleep in our landlord's lounge because we do not have space. That affected my homework timetable...I could not use my usual corner (Mary).*

Although the participants welcomed a few visitors in their homes, Mary and Shar claim they did not:

*Often, these visitors frequent for us from about April when they bring their tobacco at the Tobacco Auction Floors. There will be a continuous flow of visitors sometimes; then they never come back until after a while or even years. They come for an overnight stay. Those who grow cotton or maize only come to town to cash their cheques. Sometimes they bring in a lot of food but some don't. But each time they are in, it is impossible to do any homework. We talk and talk almost up to midnight (Kalal).*

### 5.6.5 Lack of Items for Basic Personal Hygiene

This data confirms that these participants perceived the lack of personal items to use as one of the reasons behind the disadvantages for at-risk students. The following statements list the items they state as being not readily available for daily school needs among at-risk students:

*I often miss soap (Tonde).*

*...do without lotion, toothpaste (Kalal).*

*No soap, lotion, toothpaste, breakfast, tea. No butter sometimes (Mary).*

*...go to school without breakfast (Tonde).*

*Sometimes have tea but usually no butter on my bread in the morning (Godf).*

Participants missed the above as essentials for personal school hygiene, in addition to food requirements for starting the school day, which the at-risk students in my sample often did without.

The absence of adults from their daily school lives was exacerbated by the lack of not only emotional support and back-up as part of the daily essentials of their school lives but also material shortages:

*I do not have adequate uniforms. I have outgrown my previous one as well as the shoes are worn. I squeeze myself into this set, then, when I get home, wash, dry and iron it for the next morning (Much).*

The need for a clean uniform for the following day also created the challenge of obtaining washing powder for the same uniforms and the need to iron them:

*Getting adequate stuff to use was a challenge. Like when I run out of soap while Mother is away. Or sometimes I run out of firewood and paraffin*

*when there is no electricity. I can't buy firewood because that too needs money. They never give us electricity...we are almost always in the dark here and our taps are always dry. We depend on our good neighbours for their borehole water (Mary).*

*Every Sunday and Wednesday I will wash and iron my uniform; that is my shorts, shirt and pants. I can't do that every day. Where will I get the soap? Besides, we don't have a running tap but have to queue for borehole water. So what I do is ensure I have enough for a wash in the morning before I go to bed (Kudz).*

The uniform to be washed and ironed nearly every day included pants, socks, trousers, shirts, skirts, blouses and brushing the blazers for those who had blazers. Also in short supply were personal towels:

*I share a towel with my cousins. I do not always have soap, Vaseline, toothpaste, breakfast, tea, bread and butter most of the time (Tonde).*

*I have a spare uniform and in Waterfalls we are better off in terms of water and electricity supply. I do use deodorant and have always used it. Mother buys it for me (Gerry).*

*I always wear perfume. I share it with my mother (Siphi).*

*Yes I rely on the school emergency supply if I have need for my health monthly supply essentials. Mrs X keeps these for all girls who may need them. I don't need to worry at all (Shar).*

#### **5.6.6 Basic Snack Challenges at School**

Some participants lacked what ordinarily could be regarded as basic snack for students:

*I carry cooked food sometimes when I know I am staying on a long day. I will then have my cooked food, fruit and sometimes bread from home at break (Kudz).*

*I sometimes carry fruit if it's available at home. I also sometimes carry popcorn, and that is my favourite school snack (Tonde).*

The failure to acquire the above may confirm the factors of socio-economic limitations, which the participants here suggest are causing their personal characteristic inabilities. Personal hygiene for appearance and acceptance was confirmed for adolescents by Vivas, Gelave, Aboset, Kumie, Berhane and Williams (2010), who stated that acceptance fulfils status, and that clean adolescents are more accepted for group membership to which they seek affiliation. Vivas et al (2010) further elaborate that cleanliness was associated with better socio-economic status and attraction because cleaner students are more socially attractive. Such students smelt fresher, which was necessary for the socialization process with fellow students and friends at school. By inference, those who were dirty could be avoided or could avoid coming to school out of fear of the discomfort caused by being dirty and not smelling fresh. This affected their social confidence. Maybe this could explain some of the absences by the at-risk students because cleanliness and appearance are central with regard to levels of social confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, which are critical in relation to possible bullying in all its forms, including threats and pushing, in addition to indirect bullying, for example, psychological, including teasing, rumours and shunning (Turagabeci, Nakamura & Takano, 2008). The above statements echo Turagabeci et al (2008), who also state that improved appearance decreases the risk of being bullied, suffering violence or injury as the adolescents struggle with peer pressure, self-esteem and acceptance in school.

### **5.6.7 Holiday Trips**

This data indicates that the at-risk students did not regard family holidays as necessities:

*That is not necessary. One only travels out of necessity. A holiday is not necessary when you don't have food or rent. That would be an unaffordable expense (Kudz).*

A holiday was not an affordable luxury and, as far as the participants remembered, their parents had never been on holiday. On reflection, I realized we needed a common definition of a holiday because I believed that they did not understand me. This limitation in the perception of a holiday was clear from these narratives, which clarifies a problem with defining a holiday, and confirming that all family activities related to a preoccupation with survival. A family that cannot afford a holiday is stopped from the usual activities and living patterns due to difficulties faced in affording appropriate dress, gifts or special occasions, and such families are in poverty (Fahmy, Pemberton & Sutton, 2012). I then revisited the conversation about holidays within the context of this definition:

*We do not travel at all* (Kalal, Kudzi and Daisy).

*What holiday are you talking about?* (Kudzi).

*Only Mother travels a lot, selling stuff to the gold panners of Shamva and Mazowe Valley to sell stuff like second-hand clothes* (Mary). *“But that is not on holiday; it’s a business trip”* (my interjection). *“I could not even afford the ZWD60.00 school arranged tour to Great Zimbabwe. Mother said she did not have the money* (Mary).

The perception that any other costs are considered a luxury was confirmed by the fact that paying for an educational trip was not possible. Holidays were considered a luxury for a family struggling with basic school fees and the cost of uniforms. The priorities were meeting the cost of direct educational necessities. While they were aware that some desirables, such as an educational trip, complemented their learning, they also dismissed them as being unaffordable luxuries removed from the family’s list of priorities. Such children were deprived of the educational benefits earned by practical trips for Geography and History, which placed them behind those children from families that could afford them. This was because holidays and day trips required extra money after the household’s weekly bills had been met, which was hard due to poor families’ lack of money (Gordon, Mack, Lansley, Main, Nandy, Patsios & Pomati, 2013).

### 5.6.8 Decent Meals

These narratives of the urban at-risk confirm that students' at-riskiness was due to the cash-based economy, which meant that all commodities and services had to be paid for, according to Temah-Tsafack (2014). This includes food, especially for those families without land or property, as in the case of most of the participants:

*Initially, we did not have space in the vegetable garden. Grandmother negotiated as this is not an entitlement to lodgers where I live. We were offered space for two vegetable beds. This was not always available due to issues related to availability of water, size of the landlord's family and the sizes of the families of the lodgers (Kudz).*

Tawodzera (2011) confirms this insecurity as being due to the lack of financial capital complicated by characteristically high numbers of household members in the participants' homes, urban poverty and lack of home ownership. This is in country with high hyperinflation, skyrocketing food prices and the general collapse of the formal food supply system due to continuous weaknesses in the agricultural, mining, manufacturing and tourism sectors, a worsening HIV/AIDS situation, collapsing healthcare and education systems since the 1990s, (OECD, 2003: 355). All participants were unanimous about choice and food quality per household indicating a poor basic meal, as in the following:

*We usually have sadza and vegetables daily and rarely do we have meat or fish (Kudzi).*

*Our main meals are, like I said, sadza and lacto. In the past month I remember having different meal combinations that included rice, kapenta, cabbage, corn on the cob, potatoes and rape vegetables (Daisy).*

This data confirms that the urban unemployed had limitations relating to cash access, and faced challenges in securing a decent daily meal of sadza (<http://nationalgeographic.org>, 2016) for their children to have with meat and vegetables like any other average Zimbabwean urban family. Such extremes of poverty are sometimes associated with strong beliefs in superstitious evil practices.

### **5.6.9 Evil Practices**

Siphi was asked what caused bad things to happen in her educational life, such as her leaving boarding school, and if it was better there than the current day school:

*According to my church, to which as a family we are all very ardent spiritual churchgoers, we perceive my dropping out of the boarding school a result of supernatural forces. These were unleashed by evil-minded people. My former school was a target and demonic spirits attacked the whole school...my former boarding school. I then stayed home a little, then got a transfer letter. Mother did not want me to go back. I was scared. Was still in Form 1 when this outbreak of hysteria among us happened.*

I asked whether Siphi was really sure about this. She responded:

*Definitely there were evil forces (her eyes turning red, she paused). These can attack anybody. These forces can be unleashed by Satanists, determined not to see educational success for some families and placed a bad spell on such children.*

## **5.7 PROTECTIVE PLANS FROM GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

As recommended under the Minister's Circulars of 18 July 2014 (Reference No: A/181/1), both schools had been cleared for extra lessons by the Ministry of Education and had agreed with parents to charge ZWD5.00 per student:

*Only a few of us were able to raise the required five dollars per head (Chena).*

*I am happy to be part of the holiday lessons classes group. Very happy. I am having enough time to ask and understand better within a small group and the teachers are teaching in a way that makes it easy to understand (Mary).*

*It's not easy to get this five dollars. A good number failed to do so by the deadline. We should be more...a lot more, but it was just us, this handful only who were able to raise the five dollars per head (Shar).*

*I think I am lucky indeed. I never thought I would be able to attend revision classes. I think a lot more would want to attend revision lessons and this five dollars denies others an opportunity to learn. I nearly failed to (Tonde).*

The participants suggested that they regarded themselves as lucky to be able to raise the amount. Small though it may appear, coupled with low motivation, extra lessons were less attractive for the at-risk, particularly the academically challenged:

*Obviously five dollars only for two weeks is not enough to pay these teachers with all the marking and lesson preparation then revisions in the key subjects: Mathematics, English and Science (Kalal).*

Most participants were sympathetic towards the teachers, who they felt were also disadvantaged, but regarded them in high esteem for generously offering students extra lessons in the key subjects of Mathematics, English and Science at a cost of only ZWD5.00 per student over a period of two weeks during the school holidays. For these students, such a gesture by the teachers was an act of great generosity, which they greatly appreciated.

The headmaster of School A had earlier hinted confirmation of this sentiment, stating that typical at-risk students with limited school potential would not even want to participate in my exercise. He had added that he had therefore carefully selected those who he thought would be more compliant. There were no more than fifteen students for the more popular subjects like English, which may indicate affordability challenges. Most of the students could not afford paying for attendance, which confirmed the dilemma of making those at-risk students pay for education. While the participants acknowledged fee payment challenges, they were also sure that fees were not the only reason for lack of participation, as confirmed by one participant:

*I worked for my fees, including this five dollars. I did it myself by selling vegetables, then washed cars at kuGomba. If anybody really wanted to,*

*they then needed to work for it and not expect somebody to pay for them. Non-attendance would not be right for me. I need more time with each lesson and I won't miss an opportunity for extra lessons in order to catch up (Godf).*

This confirms that the at-risk could work for their own success if they had the necessary intrinsic motivation by choosing how they could spend more of their free time (McKay, 2015). This thinking suggests that the at-risk students may not always be passive recipients and victims of societal constructions viewing them as doomed to fail, but they can actively liberate themselves through confronting adversity.

Further support to reduce failure was available during term time. Students were welcome to implement their own revision groups, work individually or invite a teacher for an arranged extra free lesson:

*We are encouraged to use the school for study and we can also stay behind on our own until sunset. Then the caretaker locks the school (Siphi).*

Also confirmed was “*an abundance of Science textbooks here. We received a one-off donation of Science books from UNESCO; all schools in Chitungwiza*” (Portia). These books were a source of a lot of excitement in both schools, making each participant visibly happy over the availability of the textbooks.

Further mitigating interventions to reduce at-riskiness was the new law protecting students from being removed from class for non-payment of fees:

*...failed to pay fees even over two terms before the new law. Thanks to the new law now asking school heads to sort the issue of outstanding fees with parents without disturbing my school attendance (Kudzi).*

Another factor working against at-riskiness was that each school had a pastoral system under the senior woman/teacher, whose role was to offer guidance and counselling for all students and targeted support for identified students causing concern:

*I believe this school is lucky to have our guidance and counselling teacher. Mrs X is a good guidance and counselling teacher and, if you listen to her, you won't get things wrong. Mrs X teaches us how to handle affairs...very high moral standards of behaviour (Siphi).*

The last factor relates less to policy and more to personal discipline, as in the case of one of the participants, who found her spiritualist approach working for her against at-riskiness:

*I remain strong against temptation unlike other young girls...because I am a Christian. I believe in the teachings of my church, Johane Masowe Gospel of God church. That makes me feel safe. I also get a feeling that something is wrong here if there is an evil person around. For me going to church helps me remain strong against evil and can therefore remain safe at school and never be tempted by silly things (Siphi).*

No further support was available to any of the participants.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The main concerns for this study were: six factors identifying educational needs, characteristics, behaviour and evidence of at-riskiness; the characteristics, if any, of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness; and the contextual factors contributing to the incidence of at-riskiness. This chapter has presented the data from participants' narratives and has analysed that data while also comparing it with other authorities on identified themes and perspectives. The at-risk students had many needs, including material learning resources, as well as emotional support to cope with their weighty disadvantages. Participants' common characteristics, such as coming from poor families, experiencing poverty and lacking in financial capital for required family and educational resources to support their educational experiences, were highlighted as being at the root of their disadvantages.

Participants were further burdened by extra responsibilities, such as looking after their younger siblings and income-generating subordinate roles for their whole families. These participants further acknowledged that they witnessed disruptive behaviour among both teachers and students, which they perceived as emanating from a weak school culture because of the

locational factors relating to schools and homes within a neighbourhood endowed with low aspirations and a weak social capital. They suggested that this background caused student misbehaviour, and the busy one-parent home situation did not help matters relating to at-riskiness.

Some participants were grateful for the few opportunities to reduce at-riskiness, such as extra tuition, guidance and counselling support, as well as the active roles of the school deputy head and some of the committed staff they have. Without them, the students would have no hope of realizing their personal aspirations because of this at-riskiness, which appeared in the form of poor teaching, low morale, indiscipline and lack of resources, in addition to poor households exacerbated by general economic decline.

## CHAPTER SIX

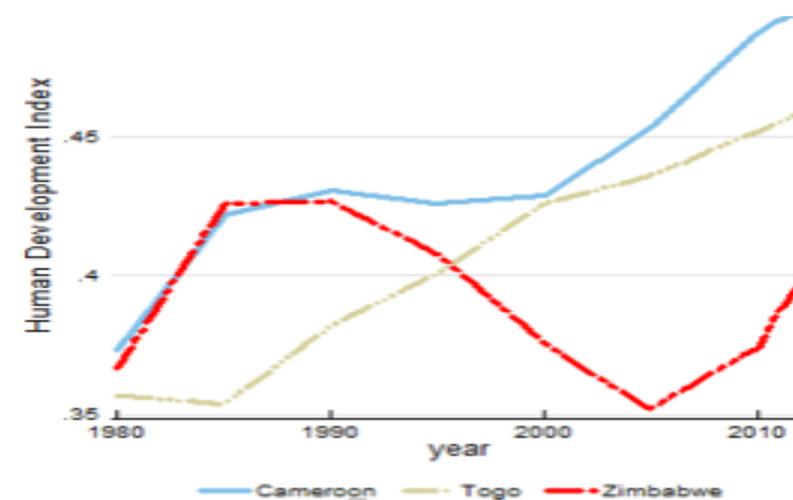
### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, I aimed to listen first to the narratives of at-risk students in Zimbabwean secondary schools, and then to reach a conclusion and make recommendations. Aiming to listen and make conclusions about a population echoes Crooks (2001) and Glaser (1978) who posit that the purpose of research is to explore the contextual factors affecting participants so that professionals may engage in debate for interventions to enhance the quality of education.

In this chapter, I have made recommendations with specific reference to my problem statement and research questions to suggest strategies that may reduce at-riskiness for students in order for them to gain effective educational access from their reduced at-riskiness. I have also made suggestions for future areas of research.

One of the problems of Zimbabwean society is its division into the elite and the poor masses. This is reflected in the deteriorating living standards and a disadvantaged education system for the masses. Deteriorating living standards were confirmed by the UNDP (2013) in an illustration comparing the national development index of Zimbabwe to Togo and Cameroon relating to healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living (UNDP 2013), as can be seen in Figure 6.1 below.



**Figure 6.1: Trends in Zimbabwean Living Standards 1980–2012**

(Adapted from UNDP, 2013: 3)

The above diagram suggests that after independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean poor experienced a steady rise in living standards, which stagnated between 1985 and 1990. This was followed by a worsening socio-economic situation, which continued to affect the poor's education up to the period of this study. The Education Act of 1992 was launched just as the worsening situation unfolded, characterized by plummeting living standards, whereby the number of poor families and levels of destitution increased. Under such socio-economic conditions, education became inaccessible among those affected families. The above confirmed trend (UNDP, 2013) was more than coincidental, being evidence of the devastating impact of ESAP-inspired policies on education, which was further felt from 1992 onwards as a result of the Education Act of 1992. This not only had the effect of increasing poverty among poor families but also educational at-riskiness for those vulnerable groups, as indicated by data from this period. The UNDP (2013) further asserted that, by 2010–11, as much as 44 per cent of the Zimbabwean population were observed to be experiencing multi-dimensional poverty.

The impact of this deteriorating socio-economic trend continued unabated with regard to high school educational access among the poor up to the time of this study, whereby whole family situations have increasingly exposed their respective children's educational at-riskiness; a complete obliteration of any imagined prospects for a good future life. There are no more equal educational access opportunities to ensure fair prospects for the poor in this reintroduced two-tier education system.

My sample confirmed the at-riskiness of the vulnerable and their characteristics within the literature relating to disadvantage: namely, relating to severe family income poverty; family unemployment; single parents; orphaned children; parents who do not own property; poorly-resourced schools and communities; and student indiscipline. The above-confirmed cases present a justification for consideration by those concerned with education, as demanded by Hammond (1998) when he declares that 'the present society has an obligation to do more by finding out what works'.

## **6.2 DELIMITATION**

It was earlier clarified that my study was limited to two purposely-chosen Chitungwiza secondary schools that evidenced clear student at-riskiness among the chosen twelve students, who had typically low pass rates, experienced significant behavioural issues and who faced the

likelihood of dropping out of/exclusion from school. The data referred to here is limited to this convenience sample, which is not representative of all schools in Zimbabwe.

Alternatively, a single case study of an at-risk individual student, school or household analysis remains possible. Further focus areas could include teachers, DEOs, officers responsible for discipline, and headmasters' narratives.

An analysis of the nature of experiences could also be carried out across districts, schools and countries, and even between Third World countries and First and Second World countries.

Further areas suggested by this topic include time use by gender, age, location of type of family household and the analysis of financial budget patterns among different households of the at-risk students, for example, single mothers, single fathers or grandparent-headed households, in order to ascertain quality of life and available resources for family educational budgets. The potential costs of such large-scale studies were considered for this paper but a decision was made to avoid any of these options on the basis of limited resources. Furthermore, the scarcity of time available for a larger population versus the limited timeframes and costs involved in travel and support for the submission of the final thesis of this academic study programme dictated that I should opt for the limited study in Chitungwiza.

### **6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

As earlier hinted at, the headmasters struggled in balancing the need to each come up with my asked-for viable sample against my need to get started. The delay from the Ministry of Education had only introduced me into schools during school holidays when the only available students were the few who had raised fees for extra lessons. By the time I had received the Harare Province Clearance letter schools had closed and were only open for extra lessons accessible by a handful who had paid the extra required fees; quite a limited number for the headmasters to sample. Accordingly, the headmasters' sampling assumption was that the typical at-risk student, such as the regular truant and the intellectually challenged in their schools, would bog down my study through non-cooperation; a fact revealed to me two weeks into my data collection exercise. By then, it was too late to explore my options against the sample typicality deficiency from which my study suffered.

While the participants acknowledged at-riskiness, I felt throughout this study after the headmasters' revelations that I had no choice. I respected the headmasters' concerns on issues of potential high attrition among the strictly at-risk but, as feared by the headmasters, completing the study would have been impossible with sketchy data from incomplete narratives. When the schools opened, I could not change my sample participants. It will therefore never be known what the results of my study would have been like had I accessed a different sample. Typical at-risk students may not always avail themselves of extra lessons if they have other interests outside school, let alone the associated challenge of financial capital and cooperating with a stranger in their school over such a long period to do an extra-curricular activity such as unrewarded research interviews.

Furthermore, the potential costs of a larger-scale study were considered for this self-sponsored study but a decision was made to avoid this larger-scale option on the basis of limited resources. There was also the prohibitive scarcity of time to consider as would be required for a larger population versus the limited timeframes and costs for travel and support. Furthermore, the submission deadlines for the final thesis towards my academic study programme dictated that I opt for the limited study in Chitungwiza.

#### **6.4 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

An overview of the literature review of the narrative study will be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs. The aims of the study were indicated in Chapter 1 (section 1.3), and were presented to address the main research question: *“What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk secondary school students in the Chitungwiza District in Zimbabwe according to a qualitative inquiry using narrative interviews?”*

This research question was sub-divided into the following sub-research questions:

*How is at-riskiness and at-risk students defined in the literature? What are the needs and characteristics of at-risk students? How is the behaviour of at-risk students explained by different theoretical perspectives? What are the characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness?*

(Chapter Two)

*How does at-riskiness appear in the Zimbabwean education system? What contextual factors contribute to the incidence of at-risk students with particular reference to secondary schools? (Chapter Three)*

*What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk students in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe using a narrative inquiry? (Chapters Four and Five)*

*Based on the findings of the literature review and empirical inquiry, what recommendations can be made for the reduction of at-riskiness among secondary school students in Zimbabwe? (Chapter Six)*

#### **6.4.1 Literature Review**

Yosso's (2006) theoretical definition of at-riskiness was introduced for classifications of forms of capital as I came up with my preferred definition of at-riskiness (section 1.1) to address the research question on how at-riskiness and at-risk students were defined in the literature.

The literature review was discussed thoroughly in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two focused on the evidence of at-riskiness in education according to the current literature from the Western World (section 2.1). I described the theoretical underpinnings, socio-cultural perspectives and social capital (section 2.2) which they needed and, as explained by Yosso (2006), at-riskiness can be explained from the socio-cultural perspective (section 2.3) and the social perspectives of at-riskiness (section 2.4), highlighting this within the specific socio-economic and political contexts of ESAP under the philosophical opposing power hierarchies and contradictions, according to Moran (2003).

The research question relating to *what are the needs and characteristics of at-risk students* was addressed in section 2.4, and included orphanhood, poverty and prolonged illness. Section 2.5 discussed stress and section 2.6 introduced at-riskiness from the characteristic school structures that were non-conducive to sustained attendance.

The research question: *what are the characteristics of school-based programmes to reduce at-riskiness*, was also addressed in sections 2.6 and 2.7.

Chapter Three focused on the Zimbabwean schooling system, specifically the legislation, structure and policy elements that pertain to at-riskiness (sections 3.2 and 3.3) in addition to historical legislative instruments, and section 3.4 dwelt on decentralization under which schools were weaned and handed over to parents under Statutory Instrument No. 87 published in 1992. This addressed the question on how at-riskiness appeared in the Zimbabwean education system. Further evidence of how at-riskiness appeared was presented under section 3.1.3 on school stratification. This also addressed the question on the contextual factors that contributed to the incidence of at-risk students with particular reference to secondary schools. Section 3.14 on geographical location and classism also addressed the question on contributory factors to at-riskiness.

#### **6.4.2 Narrative Inquiry**

The narrative inquiry addressed the third research question: What are the experiences of a selected group of at-risk students in the Chitungwiza District in Zimbabwe (Chapters Four and Five). The research design of the narrative inquiry was outlined in Chapter One, Section 1.5.2, and was comprehensively described in Chapter Four.

I used a narrative inquiry to gather data on experiences of students from two purposely-selected secondary schools in the Chitungwiza District of Zimbabwe. From these two schools, a further purposely-selected group of twelve at-risk students (sections 4.5.2.1, 4.5.2.2 and 4.5.2.3) comprising six from each school (where three were boys and three were girls) was invited on the strength of participants' confirmed characteristics of at-riskiness: namely, either absenteeism or grade repetition, if not both

Data collection from the participants was carried out using one-to-one interviews utilizing an open-ended questionnaire over seven months. This questionnaire was designed to highlight any research question concerns because I remained open to new developments that I may not have thought about relating to the research questions and sub-research questions (section 6.4). Data collection was simultaneously carried out with data analysis from the start of the process and was analysed according to Gale et al's (2013) seven-stage framework method for analysis procedure (section 4.6.4).

## **6.5 CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.5.1 Participants Confirmed the Evidence of the Definition of At-riskiness.**

Forms of the concept of at-riskiness were presented through experienced student unmet needs, student characteristics and the at-risk student behaviours (Sections 5.3.1-5.3.14). These students were aware of the school-based programmes perceived to be effective in reducing at-riskiness (Section 5.7). By classification, this evidence of the phenomenon of the disadvantage of educational at-riskiness therefore existed at three levels of disadvantage namely: personal, family and community which roughly correspond to contextual forms of social capital.

### **6.5.2 At-riskiness Within the Zimbabwean Education System Appeared According to Given Contextual Factors Contributing to the Incidence of At-riskiness.**

The contextual factors of educational at-riskiness in Zimbabwe were:

#### **6.5.2.1 Intellectual Capital**

While the literature confirmed a wide range of personal factors contributing to the disadvantage of at-riskiness, this data confirmed that Chitungwiza secondary school students perceived at-riskiness among themselves as consisting of behavioural issues possibly relating to intellectual capital to support the unmotivated student (Barse, 2015) from the propensity towards absenteeism and general and specific mischief, such as substance misuse. Some of the at-risk students lacked forms of classes of motivation: knowledge; mastering performance; involvement; and relationship motivation for consistent class attendance (Barse, 2015), which increased their likelihood to drop out or be at odds with sustained school attendance.

Some students blamed the school and its teachers while others lacked the intellectual capital to balance school work with personal responsibilities (section 5.3.14). Some of the at-risk students engaged early in responsibilities due to peer pressure because they were potentially likely to suffer from consciousness, oversensitivity to criticism and disapproval, and excessive eagerness to please, with even outright withdrawal from any sort of intimacy or contact (Singh & Kaur, 2015). This confirmation interlinks with the findings under objective 3.

### **6.5.3 There are Confirmed Experiences of Different Forms of At-Riskiness Among Some Zimbabwean Secondary School Students**

#### **6.5.3.1 Experiences of the lack of financial capital among the at-risk students in Zimbabwe were confirmed**

According to these participants, most families in Zimbabwe are unemployed due to government de-industrialization policies translating into family unemployment, financial poverty and its related money-based disadvantages (Section 5.3.1). In the literature relating to capital, it identified all forms of capital as being relevant for a successful educational experience. The participants confirmed this literature (Bourdieu, 1979; Moran, 2003; Yosso, 2006), that highlighted the evidence that paying for education under disadvantage ensured continued reproduction of economic capital inequality because the government had withdrawn state equalizing subsidies.

A higher rate of family poverty caused a higher incidence of at-riskiness because it affected self-esteem relating to the lack of quality school resources, including uniforms (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.12 and 5.6.1). Feelings of inadequacy could further negatively affect the adolescent participants' self-esteem with their already low body esteem as a result of making comparisons with their idealized body shapes (Blond, 2008; Want, 2009), which is important for constant comparison among peers. Therefore, this could result in school/event withdrawal tendencies exacerbated by the further disadvantage of family financial limitations.

Poverty among the at-risk was further exacerbated by the disadvantage of negative familial capital membership characteristics (sections 5.3.2, 5.3.8 and 5.6.2) confirming lack of financial capital or the tensions between capitalism and education. As mentioned by Moran (2003), this created unfair financial-related educational access competition in a society that also financially insulated education of the wealthy while the poor in my sample struggled as they bore the excesses of societal inequalities under marketization, privatization and selectionism (Moran, 2003) due to the ESAP-related 'pay for your education' policies because government stopped funding my sample schools (Barkauskas, 2014). Additional evidence relating to the dearth of financial capital included having to rent one or two rooms for a home, in addition to confirmed home impermanence, with very little hope of home ownership in the foreseeable future (sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2). Non-ownership of a home is a proxy indicator of lack of wealth and

an indicator of residential insecurity (Bywaters, Bunting, Davidson, Hanratty, Mason, McCartan & Steils, 2016); the corollary of which is the disadvantage of insecure educational access. Residential insecurity further reduced stable educational access through the increased risk of dropping out or failure in school-leaving examinations.

The data also confirmed that the at-risk students came from families disadvantaged by weak forms of financial capital, without regular or adequate income, which necessitated surviving as hawkers buying and selling various wares on the streets: a disadvantageous source of family income from which to raise enough money for the costs of education as a result of the state withdrawing educational subsidy and imposing a user pays policy (sections 5.3.2, 5.3.3, and 5.6.1).

Further confirmed by this data was that the socio-economic circumstances giving rise to informal employment increased at-riskiness by making it a struggle for families to afford the basics for a comfortable home and school life (Section 5.6.1). Such disadvantages affected the way the at-risk related to peers, confirmed protective factors in the enduring lack of financial capital and the negative effects of not having a close relationship with parents (Revilla, 2006).

The at-risk students typically did not possess their own space for homework (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.13, 5.6.2 and 5.6.4). Neither did they have adequate books, pocket money nor school uniforms (sections 5.3.14 and 5.4.1). At the family level, they could not afford the nice, 'trendy' things in life, such as mobile phones, or take holidays; common among the not-at-risk students (sections 5.3.13 and 5.6.7). The lack of some of these items made some students perceive their situations as being uncomfortable and worsened by possible exclusion or bullied by their peers, which resulted in them developing the disadvantageous feelings of inferiority, resentment, depression and anxiety, and further made them wish that they could withdraw from school (Revilla 2006).

### **6.5.3.2 Experiences of the lack of resources among the at-risk students in Zimbabwe confirmed**

Most of the participants came from families lacking essential resources for their education, both materially and socially. The material resources that were missed/used made school attendance difficult and included uniforms (use of second-hand or having a single or outgrown uniform),

limited books, classrooms, inadequate teachers and limited personal space (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.8, 5.3.13, 5.6.1 and 5.6.4) with no connection with the larger rural (extended) family and as such lacking in strong family support capable of providing the required social and personal resources for networking into the community (Yosso, 2005) for wisdom and for values.

This was mostly because single parents focused on raising survival incomes for daily consumption by buying and selling on the streets as hawkers (sections 5.3.7 and 5.6.1). This focus on survival left no time for the role of networking into strong familial capital, which is essential for social reproduction of cultural capital (Tzanakis, 2011) (sections 5.3.2, 5.3.8 and 5.6.3). These participants were at risk of failing to get familial capital which provided access to various community leaders for guidance into the normal socialization of school-going adolescents (Ntshangase, 2015).

The acquisition of all these characteristic roles of familial capital was handicapped by the fact that these participants mostly came from single, female-headed, unemployed households with a membership of more than four (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.9, 5.3.10 and 5.3.12). Furthermore, in general, further threatening the acquisition of familial capital was the absence of adults (sections 5.3.7 and 5.3.8), with participants' mothers said to be always away (as far as South Africa and Zambia) buying and selling for daily consumption due to unemployment. Orphanhood complicated this experience (section 5.6.2). According to the participants, this absence could last for hours up to a few weeks, leaving the adolescents on their own without parental guidance or role models, which burdened them with loneliness (section 5.6.2) and caring responsibilities (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.3, 5.3.7, 5.3.8 and 5.3.9) during these critically formative years into adulthood. This further exposed participants to the risk of temptation to abscond from school and spend time in the company of unemployed township youths (section 5.3.14), with further risk of losing their resistance capital to social vices, such as truancy, general misbehaviour, drugs and sexual experimentation; all of which raised the stakes against sustained school attendance.

### **6.5.3.3 Experiences of the lack of Socially Progressive Network Capital among the at-risk students in Zimbabwe were confirmed**

It was confirmed that some of these students felt under pressure from their peers for feeling 'different', and became unfriendly, possibly due to feeling inferior, which lowered their levels

of self-esteem (Revilla, 2006) (sections 5.3.6 and 5.5.2). This resulted in the increased possibility of feeling self-conscious and unattractive, in addition to lowered self-confidence, which potentially led to school avoidance and withdrawal, exacerbated by the risk of choosing acceptance outside school in social-capital-starved communities (section 5.3.14).

Further confirmed by the data was the fact that the at-risk students came from families that lacked social capital (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.4, 5.3.5 and 5.3.11). The neighbourhood of Chitungwiza is impoverished and disadvantaged by a very high unemployment rate (sections 5.3.1, 5.3.10 and 5.3.14). Some participants confirmed that associating with the unemployed township youths created the potential for an early debut into drugs, sex and anti-social behaviour evident in the schools, with some students having been expelled.

Negative relationships with some teachers and indiscipline issues were also confirmed in both schools, which could evidence the possible effects of the influence of the existing disadvantageous socialization processes in socially disadvantaged adolescent groups (section 5.3.4). Furthermore, the lack of motivation among some of the teachers (sections, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3 and 5.4.4) resulted in lack of guidance. However, there was some confirmed sterling work being carried out by some of the more committed, highly- professional teachers, who worked hard to help the children fight disadvantage with no regard for personal material gain.

The data confirmed the interdependence of at-riskiness factors, for example, coming from a single-mother-headed household increased the likelihood of the disadvantage of being poor and of becoming a carer for siblings (sections 5.3.7 and 5.3.8). The narratives relating to this confirmed that the disadvantaged would always put others first (as in looking after their younger siblings) (section 5.3.7) regardless of the personal cost to their education, and would even spend their time in isolation and alienation from school because other students made them feel uncomfortable (Singh & Kaur, 2015) (section 5.3.3). This in turn limited educational participation and increased the likelihood of failure.

Living in a poor neighbourhood with no social capital for role models from even within their households potentially disadvantaged students into staying away from school; hence the need for remedial support.

My study has conclusively identified some perspectives on at-riskiness within the individual participants' construct, where the interpretation of their circumstances was individually placed within their personal life historical context against the wider socio-political and economic circumstances of each participant (Abrahão, 2008). These narratives were listed within the framework of the research questions and that has confirmed the existence of educational disadvantages of at-riskiness some students in Zimbabwean secondary schools who variously lacked forms of required educational capital.

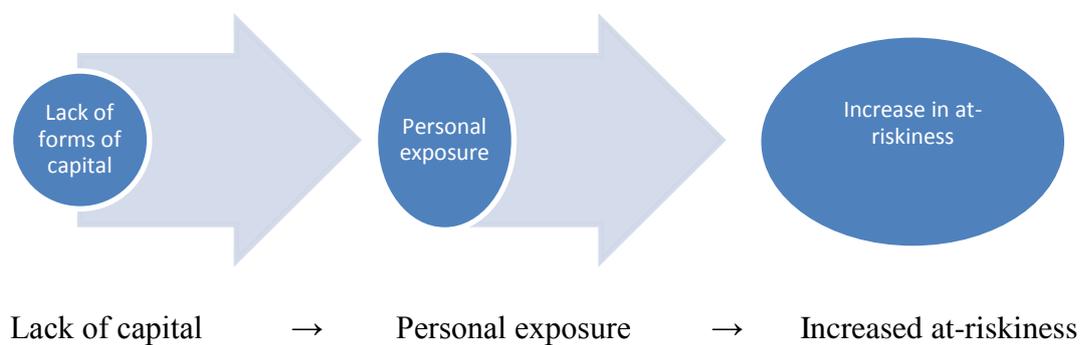
It is interesting to note that the at-risk students in Chitungwiza confirmed daily experiences of a number of the effects of capital deficiency malaise related to the general socio-economic environment in the country, exacerbated by a government that seems to have abandoned the educational quality concerns of children from working classes within Zimbabwean society. The individual-pays model of education, as adopted under the neoliberalism capitalist models of individualism, has wrecked the poor's education through state neglect by asking communities to compete in educational provision. Poor families have no means for sustaining their children's education and the government has no plan for facilitating means for these families to pay for their children's quality education.

As a result of these narratives, in conclusion, my analysis is that those at-risk students in Chitungwizan secondary schools are greatly disadvantaged in accessing a meaningfully effective educational experience for their personal mobility up the social ladder.

## **6.6 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY**

My study has used a narrative inquiry to explore at-riskiness. I allowed the participants to speak for themselves rather than have someone else, such as a teacher or a parent, define their problem. This is ground-breaking work with regard to Zimbabwe, contributing to the theory on at-riskiness in a developing country context. Most work on at-riskiness to date has been done in the US, Australia and the UK. Popular research closest to at-riskiness in Zimbabwe has tended to dwell on single themes, such as dropouts, and has not focused on the global approach as in in this study. In Zimbabwe, my study has confirmed that economic and political factors have played a unique role in creating educational at-riskiness. I do not believe that political factors play any role in at-riskiness in the US but, quite clearly in Zimbabwe, that is the case.

My contribution to research is that through this study I have confirmed a link between the working children’s perceived disadvantages and the state’s construction of a non-inclusive, weak and impoverishing socio-economic environment disabling impact on household employment opportunities for the working classes to pay for their children’s equal and quality education. The students have acknowledged this capital-deficient environment as a recipe for their exposure as children from working-class families to greater disadvantages of increased at-riskiness, as illustrated in Figure 6.2 below, to indicate how the lack of capital relates to working-class students’ educational at-riskiness.



**Figure 6.2: The Relationship Between Lack of Capital and At-riskiness**

## 6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these conclusions, to reduce at-riskiness among secondary school students in Zimbabwe it is recommend that the three areas of my objectives be addressed by the people’s government and that responsibility should not be delegated without government priority supervision.

### 6.7.1 Government Needs to Redefine Education and Make Special Education More Inclusive

The Zimbabwean government needs to move a step further from its current conceptual definition of generic education into a more robust and inclusive one, acknowledging the existence of at-riskiness in all its forms even if it is at times elusive and ‘uncomfortable’ for the state. Government needs to stop pretending that the disadvantages for the poor’s children do

not exist, and should tackle this issue by implementing a formal instrument, such as an Act or Minute Circular, in order to move beyond the traditionally established and limited special needs concept. It is hoped that this may increase awareness of the disadvantages of those at-risk students currently not being considered for special support, for example, child carers who are disadvantaged by spending many of their valuable hours working in carer roles for their siblings and possibly adults at home, which deprives the students of their time for study, homework and relaxation.

### **6.7.2 Government Needs to Listen and Improve Teacher/Labour Management Relations**

As a matter of urgency, government will need to improve its teacher/labour management relations. The list of reasons for high teacher absenteeism in Zimbabwe appears to include labour relations issues. From that list, the data suggests that remuneration requires improvement.

Government also needs to commit to addressing its own failures by listening to both teachers and students relating to how the education of at-risk students can be improved.

### **6.7.3 Government Needs to Provide a Monthly Family Poverty Alleviation Income for Disadvantaged Families**

With no national employment strategy and an ever-rising cost of living, government needs to provide state support for disadvantaged families, such as single-mother-headed households, those in search of employment, those with disabilities, and the elderly who care for school-going children but who are not in receipt of a pension to cushion them from the full impact of the costs of educational expenses. There is evidence of great income resources for the nation with no corresponding evidence on the improvement of the poor's welfare and education except for a few associated with the ruling classes of a single political party.

## **6.7.4 Appearance of At-riskiness Based Recommendations**

### **6.7.4.1 Government Needs to Seriously Reconsider its National Re-Industrialization Agenda with a View to Employment Creation for the Improvement of People's Welfare**

Poverty should not be accepted as some Zimbabweans' 'way of life' without hope for change; government must improve poor people's living conditions. Since the adoption of the ESAP, the most significant development has been an increase in the number of industries that have closed down or that have relocated to neighbouring countries. This has removed many families' means of a comfortable income from decent, stable employment. The result has had a devastating effect on employment prospects, which in turn has affected individual households' capacity to provide for their children's education. A new way of creating re-industrialization needs to be found beyond the Look East Policy rhetoric, which has not created employment for indigenous citizens to gain the educational access that their disadvantaged children need.

### **6.7.4.2 Government Should Consider Socio-Economic Status-Based Support for Disadvantaged Learners**

Extra lessons and revision sessions need to be made accessible to all public examination candidates. The current scenario, whereby revision sessions are provided to only fee-paying candidates, is punitive and non-inclusive. Some of those at risk have the further disadvantage of not noticing the value of extra tuition.

Preparations for public examinations should be strategized, with more inclusive policies being created for all and made compulsory in order to guarantee full attendance by all candidates, thereby resulting in equal opportunities for all. Without extra tuition, the at-risk students are further disadvantaged by having to sit public examinations with less preparation than their colleagues who have been able to revise and prepare. This results in a non-reversible, lifelong 'journey of exclusion' for some as a result of their poorer public examination results affecting their job opportunities.

### **6.7.4.3 Government Should Implement Family Support Grants**

There is an urgent need for parents to receive substantial state support by reversing the Education Act of 1992 and other ESAP-related socio-economic initiatives that affect families' ability to afford educational access. It is recommended that government implements family support grants, such as those in South Africa, in order to protect at-risk children. South Africa has an equalization fund of learner subsidies for no-fee schools. This is in contrast to the Zimbabwean government's decision for schools to be supported by communities, some of whom have no means of raising the required fees for quality educational access for children of poor families.

### **6.7.5 Participant Personal Experiences Based Recommendations**

#### **6.7.5.1 Government Needs to Stop Paying Lip Service to Equality of Condition for Access Into all Levels of Education**

There should be more support from government for Equality of Condition for access into secondary school education. One way would be to create stronger partnerships with poor communities in establishing additional better quality secondary schools in disadvantaged areas. Government should do this by reconsidering its policy relating to secondary school quality and access for all children in a more practical way beyond political rhetoric. Leaving this issue for communities to determine the quality and resources makes secondary school education a service only accessible by those few families who can afford it, to the detriment of children from poor communities who will never benefit from secondary school education since some communities are confirmed financial capital scarce zones.

## **6.8 PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Although I contacted the authorities early enough for Head Office clearance, by the end of March 2016 I had still not received clearance into the district from the province. This resulted in a few more trips being made to the province where, among other delays, I had to wait for the Provincial Director's stamp, which I needed on my clearance letter to visit Chitungwiza District Office. I therefore occupied myself by launching my pilot study and initial preparatory fieldwork strategy refinement.

Once in Chitungwiza, the headmasters of the schools were kind to me, but the schools were closed and I could not wait. After the preliminary rapport building meeting, most of the participants remained very cooperative and I was to later learn that they were not a typical group. The headmasters had decided that the typically at-risk group would be difficult and awkward with regard to timely completion of meaningful data collection. Although a room in each school had been assigned to us, over time, both headmasters allowed flexibility when it was hot or when it was noisy and we could therefore conduct our interviews according to individual preferences in either comfortable settings or in more informal locations during the data collection process (Koro-Ljungberg, Bussing, Williamson & M'Cormack-Hale, 2008). A few more students wanted to join the groups which, of course, I could not accept.

I also became conscious that I probably had a conflict of interest. At-riskiness is a subject that I feel very passionately about and I wondered to what extent my own perceptions and possible biases impacted and defined (Menna & Abrahão, 2012) what the participants said to me.

On reflection, I questioned myself with whose eyes did I see, whose ears did I hear with and whose values did I articulate in appreciating what was going on, and that fear of contaminating narratives remained with me up to the final write-up stage, suggesting that closure of the chapter on data presentation was the most difficult task in this study.

I found myself recalling how each situation would make meaning to me from my school days as a student and professional days as a teacher, headmaster and principal, as well as a parent, but most importantly as a researcher. As researcher, I relied on my memory each evening to recall the participants' gestures and facial and emotional expressions because I did not have a camcorder. Memory is the key element for the autobiographical researcher in helping to understand the object of study (Menna & Abrahão 2012). I developed personal trust in my own capacity to become a fair storyteller and to present these narratives hoping they did not carry traces of my own prejudices but were honest narratives within the micro- and macrostructures of the educational social realities in which the participants lived their educational lives.

## **6.9 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In this study, my focus was on the experiences of disadvantaged secondary students in Chitungwiza. While this study focused on the learners' narratives within a poor urban setting,

future research could explore the narratives of students from remote rural schools. In general, all rural non-government Zimbabwean schools are disadvantaged. Under those sampling conditions, future participants for this type of research could include both parents and teachers of these disadvantaged schools.

Further research could result in interesting findings from comparisons between the narratives of disadvantaged rural students with their teachers and disadvantaged urban students with their teachers, or between a Third World disadvantaged school and a First World disadvantaged school, or between another developing country school from a different continent.

Further areas for possible consideration towards future research could be the comparative analysis of evidence of resistance capital against at-riskiness in schools by ward, district, city or province. For example, it is well known that Binga in Matabeleland North is the least developed and the worst government-neglected area of Zimbabwe. My study suggests that such areas may have the highest potential for student at-riskiness and yet some students still do well. Alternatively, a single case study of an at-risk individual student, school or household analysis remains possible in provinces such as Binga. Further focus areas could include perspectives of teachers, DEOs, officers responsible for discipline and headmasters' narratives.

It is also possible to plan for comparative studies between other sub-Saharan African countries and even between Third World countries and First or Second World countries. Areas of focus could include topics on time use by gender, age, location of type of family household and the analysis of financial budget patterns among different households of the at-risk students. Such examples may be single mothers, single fathers or grandparent-headed households in order to ascertain quality of life and available resources for family educational budgets.

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## APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

17 February 2016

Ref : **2016/02/17/08735409/20/MC**

Student : Mr LC Mabhoyi

Student Number : 08735409

Dear Mr Mabhoyi

**Decision: Ethics Approval**

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#### Researcher

Mr LC Mabhoyi

Tel: +441159470961

Email: [8735409@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:8735409@mylife.unisa.ac.za)

#### Supervisor

Prof J Seroto

College of Education

Department of Educational Foundations

Tel: 012 429 4579

Email: [serotj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:serotj@unisa.ac.za)

**Proposal:** Narratives of at-risk students in secondary schools in Zimbabwe

**Qualification:** D Ed in Socio-Education

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Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the research.

*The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the College of Education Research Ethics Review Committee on 17 February 2016.*

*The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:*

- 1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the*

*methodology, should be communicated in writing to the College of Education Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*

- 3) *The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

**Note:**

*The reference number **2016/02/17/08735409/20/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication [e.g. Webmail, E-mail messages, letters] with the intended research participants, as well as with the College of Education RERC.*

Kind regards,



**Dr M Claassens**

**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
[mcdtc@netactive.co.za](mailto:mcdtc@netactive.co.za)

**Prof VI McKay**

**EXECUTIVE DEAN**

**APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PERMIT FROM THE SECRETARY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

All communications should be addressed to  
"The Secretary for Primary and Secondary  
Education  
Telephone: 232006  
Telegraphic address: "EDUCATION"  
Fax: 794505



**Reference:** C/426/3 Harare  
Ministry of Primary and  
Secondary Education  
P.O Box CY 121  
Causeway  
**HARARE**

09 November 2015

Lloyd C Mabhoji  
University Of South Africa  
P.O Box 392  
Unisa, 003  
Republic of South Africa

**Re: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE: CHITUNGWIZA SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Reference is made to your application to carry out research at the above mentioned schools in Harare Metropolitan Province on the research title:

**"NARRATIVES OF AT RISK STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF ZIMBABWE"**

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the Provincial Education Director, Harare Metropolitan Province, who is responsible for the schools which you want to involve in your research. You should ensure that your research work does not disrupt the normal operations of the school. Where students are involved, parental consent is required.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education by 30 June 2017.

F. Chinyowa  
Acting Director: Planning, Research and Statistics  
For: **SECRETARY FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**  
cc: PED - Harare Metropolitan



**APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM THE HARARE PROVINCIAL REGION AND THE  
CHITUNGWIZA DISTRICT OFFICE**

All communications should be  
addressed to

"The Provincial Education  
Director"

Telephone : 792671-9  
Fax : 796125/792548  
E-mail : moeschre@yahoo.com



ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Primary and Secondary  
Education  
Harare Provincial Education Office  
P. O. Box CY 1343  
Causeway  
Zimbabwe

19/04/2016

Prof. C. Mubhaya  
University of South Africa  
P.O. Box 392  
South Africa

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS**

Chitungwiza District on the research title  
"Narrative of at least 5 students in  
Secondary Schools of Zimbabwe"

Reference is made to the letter dated 09 November 2016

Please be advised that the Provincial Education Director grants you authority to carry out your research on the above topic. You are required to supply Provincial Office with a copy of your research findings.

Stephanie  
FOR: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR  
HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE

19  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
CHITUNGWIZA DISTRICT OFFICE  
EDUCATION INSPECTOR  
19 APR 2016  
P.O. BOX 624 59, CHITUNGWIZA  
TEL: 0270-2407/0270-81204

## APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER FROM HEADMASTERS OF SELECTED SCHOOLS



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

### REQUEST TO THE HEADTEACHER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN A CHITUNGWIZA SECONDARY SCHOOL

41 Sherwin Walk  
Nottingham  
NG3 1AH  
United Kingdom

17 October 2015

The Headteacher  
Chitungwiza  
Zimbabwe



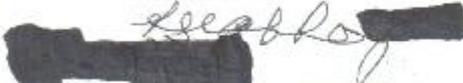
Dear Sir

I, Lloyd Chaurika Mabhoyi, am doing research with Professor J Seroto, the Department of Educational Foundations, University of South Africa, towards a Doctor of Education degree at the University of South Africa. I am seeking permission to carry out my study entitled **“Narratives of at-risk students in secondary schools of Zimbabwe”** at your school. I am approaching you for permission to interview six selected Form Four students who are examples of at-riskiness due to grade repetition and high levels of absence. Interviews will be roughly 90 minutes long and will be conducted after school hours at a suitable venue at the school. Participating in the research will enable both the students and the school to gain more knowledge regarding the at-riskiness and ways that it can be reduced. I do not anticipate any risks with the study. The students’ names will not be disclosed and the name of the school will be kept confidential. Participation is unpaid and voluntary. Students may withdraw at any stage or refused to answer any questions. All students will be asked to give their written assent for participation in the research and their parents/guardians will also be asked to give their written consent to their children’s participation in the study. The outcome of the study will comprise a doctoral dissertation and the findings may be published in a scientific journal. The

benefits of this study are recommendations relating to how students experiencing at-riskiness may be supported with a view to their education.

Upon the successful completion of the study, I will return to the school to make a presentation of my findings to which the school staff and participants will be invited. If you have questions about this study please ask me on +44 78 24393235 and my e-mail is 8735409@mylife.ac.za. or my study supervisor, Professor Prof J Seroto, Department of Educational Foundations, Tel: 012 429 4579, Email: serotj@unisa.ac.za. Office: AJH van der Walt, 6-80. Permission for the study has already been given by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

Yours sincerely



Lloyd Chaurika M. [Redacted]

Researcher

## APPENDIX E: CONSENT LETTER FROM PRINCIPALS

### REQUEST FOR PARENTAL CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION OF MINORS IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

41 Sherwin Walk  
Nottingham  
NG3 1AH  
United Kingdom

17 October 2015

#### Dear Parent

Your <son/daughter/child> is invited to participate in a study entitled ‘**Narratives of at-risk students in secondary schools of Zimbabwe**’. I am undertaking this study as part of my doctoral research at the University of South Africa. The possible benefits of the study are that I will make recommendations to the school staff and your child about how best they may be supported in their education.

Your <son/daughter/child> has indicated a willingness to participate and I am asking for permission to include him/her in this study. If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to take part in two individual interviews with me. He/she will answer my questions and narrate any issues to do with her/his educational experiences. I will record all our conversations on a digital recorder and download this onto my password protected computer. Later I will make a transcript of the recording. These files will be safely stored on my password protected computer for five years upon which they will be deleted.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential. I shall assign your child a pseudonym and his or her responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name or the school’s name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study. Your child’s participation in this

study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty. Interviews will last roughly ninety minutes and take place after school hours so that your child will not lose any instructional time.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the attached assent form which accompanies this letter.

If you have questions about this study please ask me on +447824393235 and my e-mail is 8735409@mylife.ac.za or my study supervisor, Professor Prof J Seroto, Department of Educational Foundations, Tel: 012 429 4579, Email: [serotj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:serotj@unisa.ac.za), Office: AJH van der Walt, 6-80. Permission for the study has already been given by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, University of South Africa.

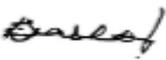
You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Sincerely

Lloyd Chaurika Mabhoji

Name of child: .....

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print)      \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's signature:      20/04/2016  
Date:

Lloyd Chaurika Mabhoji\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's name (print)        
Researcher's signature      4th April 2015  
Date:

## **APPENDIX F: ASSENT LETTER FROM PARTICIPANTS**

41 Sherwin Walk  
Nottingham  
NG3 1AH  
United Kingdom  
17 October 2015

### **LETTER OF ASSENT FROM STUDENTS IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

Dear ....

I am doing a study on ‘**Narratives of at-risk students in secondary schools of Zimbabwe**’ as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways to support you in your schooling.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

Your participation entails you answering some questions and narrating stories about your educational experiences in two conversations with me. Each session will be about an hour and a half long. These questions are all about your educational experiences. I want to know what you enjoyed, what you did not and why so. Your participation is voluntary and there are no rewards to be benefit from participation. I will record the session proceedings on my digital recorder and store all your answers to my questions on my password protected computer. I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. You do not have to be part of this study if you don’t want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the following form. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at: +44 78 24393235. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Sincerely

Lloyd Chaurika Mabhozi

Phone number: +447824393235.....

Do not sign written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

### WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

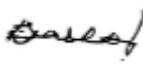
Student's name [redacted] Student's signature [redacted] Date: [redacted]

Witness's name (print) [redacted] Witness's signature [redacted] Date: [redacted]

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

Lloyd Chaurika Mabhozi  06/03/2016

Researcher's name (print) Researcher's signature: Date:

## APPENDIX G: McADMAS' (1995) FRAMEWORK

### McADAM'S MODIFIED LIFE HISTORY SCHEDULE

This is an interview about the story of your life. I am asking you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -- to tell me the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your own future. In telling me a story about your own life, you do not need to tell me everything that has ever happened to you. A story is selective. It may focus on a few key events, a few key relationships, a few key themes which recur in the narrative. In telling your own life story, you should concentrate on material in your own life that you believe to be important -- information about yourself and your life which says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are. Your story should tell how you are similar to other people as well as how you are unique. The interview is divided into a number of sections. In order to complete the interview within an hour and a half or so, it is important that we do not get bogged down in the early sections, especially the first one in which I will ask you to provide an overall outline of your story. The interview starts with general things and moves to the particular. Therefore, do not feel compelled to provide a lot of detail in the first section in which I ask for this outline. The detail will come later. I will guide you through the interview so that we can finish it in good time.

#### 1. General Introduction

Tell me about your primary and secondary school education.

#### Chapter 1: Let us talk about Chapter 1: What is it called?

Can you tell me what your parents were doing and where they were living when you started Form One? You are the main character in your story but who were the other characters in your story at the beginning of your secondary education? What was the best memory from Chapter 1? What was your worst memory from Chapter 1? What is the change that leads to chapter 2?

#### Chapter 2: What is Chapter 2 called?

Are the characters still the same? Any new characters? Is the setting still the same or is it different now? Tell me a clear memory from Chapter 2? What is the best memory from Chapter 2? What is the worst memory from Chapter 2? What is the change that leads to Chapter 3?

#### Chapter 3: What is Chapter 3 called?

Are there any new characters? Is the setting different? Tell me a clear memory from Chapter 3? What is the worst moment from Chapter 3? What is the best moment from Chapter 3?

Significant People: Looking back on the last three/four chapters of your book, who are the four most important characters in your book? Tell me why?

Challenges: Most hero's or heroines in stories have challenges to face, hard times that they must go through to get to the 'Happy Ending.' What do you think the difficult things are that you had to face in your story? What helped you cope with those things?

Chapter number 4 is still being written as you live it now, so what challenges are you still dealing with? How are you dealing with them?

Future: What do you think is going to happen in the next chapter of your story? What would you like to happen? In a few chapters time, how would you like the story to change?

What would happen to you and the other characters? Will any new characters be introduced? What about the setting? Will it change from Chitungwiza? Why? What are your hopes and dreams?

What do you suggest should happen in order to ensure your sustained school attendance? Who needs to be involved and in what form? What do you suggest should happen for you to succeed at school?

Adapted from McAdams (1995)