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**SCHOOL DECLINE AND CHOICE IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF TWO  
SCHOOLS IN THE CHIPINGE DISTRICT**

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**SCHOOL DECLINE AND CHOICE IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF TWO SCHOOLS  
IN THE CHIPINGE DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of  
Education in the School of Education.**

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**(EDGEWOOD CAMPUS)**

**2014**

## DECLARATION

I, Freedom Chiororo, declare that this research report, **“School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: The case of two schools in the Chipinge district”** abides by the following rules:

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Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr F. Chiororo

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## **SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT**

This dissertation has been submitted with/ without my approval

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Mr Sipiwe Eric Mthiyane (Supervisor)

December 2014

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to the Almighty God, without whom nothing is possible. I also dedicate this study to my late father, Mr G.M. Chiororo who continues to be a source of inspiration in my life. I wish he was here to see how I have grown both as a man and to share the joys of my academic achievement.

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe. School decline has an impact on the way that parents and learners choose schools as well as whether they will move out of one school into another (Reay, 1996). A case study was conducted in two schools in the Chipinge district. The participants included the school management team members and parents of both schools. This study was located in the interpretive paradigm. Documents review, observations and semi-structured interviews constitute the research instruments for data generation. This study was framed by Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) and Kanter's (2004) models of organisational decline. Local, continental and international scholastic works, on the research topic, were interrogated to seek insights into the progress so far made and determine the agenda to the explored phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration.

The analysis and discussion of the generated data showed that school decline in Zimbabwe was caused by a myriad of factors such as the following: the poor Zimbabwean economy; migration of teachers to other countries; lack of capital/resources in schools and poor leadership and management in schools. Also noted was the link amongst the three phenomena under study. A school in decline will lose the preferential choice of both parents and learners leading to learner migration to better performing schools. The following were the recommendations of the study based on the findings and conclusions: the government should increase funds to the educational sector, improve salaries and working conditions of teachers. Students and the community should be educated on the importance of education. For schools to retain students and teachers and become the first choice of both parents and learners they need to widen their school curriculum in terms of the subjects offered and sporting activities; develop their infrastructure and also keep up with technological developments by introducing computers and internet in schools.

Implications for further study were to do a comparative study of the three phenomena across districts and provinces including an increased sample size, sample population and time framework (years) to come to a conclusive agreement of the relationship and the understanding of the phenomena.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

**UKZN**- University of KwaZulu-Natal

**SMT**- School Management Team

**HOD**- Head of Department

**NGO** – Non- Government Organisation

**CLPS**- Chronically-Low Performing Schools

**NCLB**- No Child Left Behind

**AYP**- Adequate Yearly Progress

**SACMEQ**- Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

**FPE**- Free Primary Education

**KCPE**- Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

**MOE**- Ministry of Education

**IRIN**- Integrated Regional Information Networks

**UNICEF**- United Nations International Children’s Education Fund

**WOZA**- Women of Zimbabwe Arise

**OECD**- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**LFP**- Low-Fee Private

**EFA**- Education for All

**CDE**- Centre for Development and Enterprise

**LDC**- Least developed country

**ZIMSEC**- Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council



## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A: Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal	155
APPENDIX B: Permission letter to the Chipinge District Educational Office	156
APPENDIX C: Permission letter from the Chipinge District Educational Office	158
APPENDIX D: Permission letters to the school principal 1	160
APPENDIX E: Permission letter from the school principal 1	162
APPENDIX F: Declaration to consent of the school principal 1	164
APPENDIX G: Permission letters to the school principal 2	165
APPENDIX H: Permission letter from the school principal 2	167
APPENDIX I: Declaration to consent of the school principal 2	169
APPENDIX J: Permission letters to the parents	170
APPENDIX K: Declaration to consent of the parents	172
APPENDIX L: Biographical details of the school management team members	173
APPENDIX M: Interview schedule for the school management team members	174
APPENDIX N: Interview schedule of the parents	176
APPENDIX O: Observation schedule	178
APPENDIX P: Documents review schedule	179
APPENDIX Q: Language editors certificate	180

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> Academic performance of the researched school over the past eight years	2
<b>Table 2:</b> National O level pass rates in Zimbabwe 1998 to 2003	51
<b>Table 3:</b> Stages of decline and corresponding organisational action	60
<b>Table 4:</b> Combined Model of Organisational Decline: Healthy Start	61
<b>Table 5:</b> Combined Model of Organisational Decline: Schools as organisations	62

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Title page	(i)
Declaration	(ii)
Supervisor's Statement	(iii)
Dedication	(iv)
Acknowledgments	(v)
Abstract	(vi)
List of Acronyms	(vii)
List of Appendices	(viii)
List of tables	(ix)
Table of contents	(x)

### CHAPTER ONE

#### BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background, purpose and rationale for the study	1
1.3	Aims and objectives of the study	5
1.4	Clarification of key concepts/terms	5
	1.4.1 Leadership	6
	1.4.2 Distributive leadership	6

1.4.3	Instructional leadership	6
1.4.4	Transformational leadership	7
1.5	Literature review	7
1.6	Theoretical frameworks	8
1.7	Research design and methodology	9
1.7.1	Research design	9
1.7.2	Research methodology	10
1.7.3	Research paradigm	10
1.7.4	Sampling	11
1.7.5	Methods of data generation	11
1.7.6	Data analysis	12
1.7.7	Triangulation	12
1.7.8	Issues of trustworthiness	13
1.7.9	Ethical issues	13
1.8	Limitations of the study	14
1.9	Delimitation of the study	14
1.10	Organisation of the study	15
1.11	Chapter summary	16

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 School decline	17
2.2.1 International literature	17
2.2.2 Continental literature	25
2.2.3 Zimbabwean literature	30
2.3 School choice	35
2.3.1 International literature	35
2.3.2 Continental literature	40
2.3.3 Zimbabwean literature	47
2.4 Managing decline	52
2.4.1 Turn around decline	53
2.5 Sustaining success	54
2.6 Helping disadvantaged schools and students improve	55
2.6.1 Strengthen and support leadership	56
2.6.2 Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment	56
2.6.3 Attract, support and retain high quality teachers	56
2.6.4 Ensure effective classroom learning strategies	56
2.6.5 Prioritise linking schools with parents and communities	57
2.7 Chapter summary	57

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

3.1 Introduction	58
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3.2 Organisational decline	58
3.3 Theoretical frameworks	59
3.3.1 Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989): Five stage model of organisational decline	60
3.3.1.1 Stage one: Blinded	64
3.3.1.2 Stage two: Inaction	65
3.3.1.3 Stage three: Faulty Action	66
3.3.1.4 Stage four: Crisis	68
3.3.1.5 Stage five: Dissolution	70
3.3.2 Kanter's (2004) organisational decline theory	71
3.4 Chapter summary	77

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

4.1 Introduction	79
4.2 The research design and methodology	79
4.3 Research paradigm	81
4.4 Sampling	84
4.5 Methods chosen for data generation	85
4.5.1 Interviews	85
4.5.2 Observations	86
4.5.3 Documents review	87
4.6 Data analysis	88
4.7 Ethical considerations	91
4.8 Issues of trustworthiness	92
4.9 Triangulation	93

4.10	Limitations to the study	94
4.11	Chapter summary	94
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>		
<b>DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS</b>		
5.1	Introduction	96
5.2	Presentation of data from the field	96
5.2.1	Understanding of school decline	96
5.2.2	The causes of school decline of once reputable schools in Zimbabwe	100
5.2.2.1	Socio-economic conditions, the poor economy of Zimbabwe and politics both (national and school politics)	100
5.2.2.2	Lack of funding and resources towards education and incentives for teachers	104
5.2.2.3	The departure of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries	106
5.2.2.4	Low teacher morale, poor attitude of students to learning and children's rights	108
5.2.2.5	The link between management and school decline	111
5.3	Suggestions to arrest decline	116
5.4	School choice	119
5.5	School decline, school choice and learner migration	123
5.6	Chapter summary	126

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Introduction	127
6.2 Summary of the study	127
6.3 Conclusions	128
6.4 Recommendations for the study	129
6.4.1 Turning around decline in schools	129
6.4.2 Minimising the causes of decline	130
6.4.3 Improving leadership and management in schools	130
6.4.4 The role of the government	131
6.4.5 Becoming a school of choice	131
6.4.6 School influence on the three phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration	131
6.5 Implications for further study	131
6.6 Chapter summary	133
<b>REFERENCES</b>	134



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the entire research study on school decline and choice in Zimbabwe. Outlined first is the background, purpose and rationale for the study. These are followed by the aims, objectives and the key research questions that underpin the study. Key concepts are explained to clarify their meanings and how they are used in the study. Brief literature review and the theoretical frameworks that guide the study are included. The research design and methodology, delimitation and limitations of the study and the organisation of the study are also highlighted. A summary concludes the chapter including all the aspects that have been discussed throughout this chapter.

### 1.2 Background, purpose and rationale for the study

Some schools in Zimbabwe have shown signs of decline and this has been aggravated by the economic meltdown which started in 2006 up to 2010 (Tendi, 2009). The Zimbabwean economy was in shambles by 2008 with inflation rates over thousands. The country's money became valueless to a point in time where everyone was a millionaire but poor. The government had to introduce million and billion dollar notes. The Gross National Product of the country fell from \$900 in 1990 to \$200 by 2007, while the cost of most of the majority of Zimbabweans by 2005 was less than \$2 a day (Mlambo & Raftopoulos, 2010, p.3). The collapse of the Zimbabwean economy had a negative impact across all sectors of the economy including the once admired education sector. Schools that were once reputable for good academic achievement went into decline for various reasons such as loss of senior staff looking for better working conditions outside the country, lack of financial resources to manage the schools, buy text books and necessary equipment to facilitate effective quality education in Zimbabwe and learners are migrating in search of better schools leaving some schools in a spiral of decline (Tendi, 2009). This researcher further suggests that the economic crisis which began in 2000 up to 2006 has led to poor educational standards. Aggravating the poor educational system in Zimbabwe is the inability of the government to employ qualified teachers, provide teaching and learning aid materials like furniture and textbooks and finally to remunerate teachers well.

The two schools included in this study used to be high academic achieving schools but one of them Tagwinya High School (pseudonym) has undergone decline while Umambo High School (pseudonym) has managed to maintain its high academic achievement. This has led parents to choose Umambo High School over Tagwinya High School in terms of their children’s education and also learner and staff migration is in the same direction where learners are leaving Tagwinya High School for Umambo High School. This motivated me to explore the relationship among school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe. The table below illustrates this downward trend in Tagwinya High School while in Umambo High School there has been consistent academic performance in the last decade.

**Table 1:** Academic performance of the researched school over the past eight years

Advanced School Results in the last decade (2003-2012)															
Umambo High School								Tagwinya High School							
2005	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	2005	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
86.7%	88	90	91.3	93	94.5	96	98.2	85%	80.9	79.3	73.5	72.7	67.8	60.6	58

**Source:** Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) files (2012).

This study focused on school decline, choice and learner migration in two High Schools in Zimbabwe. The study highlighted how school decline impacts on choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe utilising a case study of two High Schools in a rural education district. Specifically, the study focused on the role of the School Management Teams (SMT) which includes professional personnel who are responsible for school management and administration; it included the principals, deputy principals and the heads of departments in schools. In addition, the study focused on the parents of the pupils of both High Schools. The school management team members and parents of both schools were interviewed on school decline and how it has influenced school choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe.

At a personal level as a teacher, I have observed that some Zimbabwean schools have declined compared to what they have been in the past decade. This observation has also been confirmed

by my critical friends (fellow teachers and former school mates) who are citing similar observations in their own areas. In the case of my former High School, it used to be a dream school of most Zimbabwean children and parents. The school used to only take the best pupils. Pupils with four or five units only for their form one intake and conducting interviews at four to five towns to cater for the many interviewees from across the country for their intake. The same school today has declined in terms of academic and sporting achievement. It used to dominate the first position but now it is no longer in the top five in terms of best results in academic achievement. The buildings and other physical structures are in a state of decline and even the number of children willing to study there has also declined. There has also been a lot of changes in the senior management and a high staff turnover of senior teachers at the school lately. This has motivated me to study why my school has declined in terms of academic and sporting achievement and also why it has lost its first choice preference as the best school in Zimbabwe to both pupils and parents.

As a teacher at a former historically Black school in Zimbabwe, I have observed that our school is continuously in decline in terms of the academic and sporting achievement. The best students or the richer students are leaving the school for private or better historical black schools, consequently leaving the school in a spiral of decline. The school has not been able to retain students and even the staff turnover has been high. Senior teachers leaving for better working conditions outside the country in countries like South Africa and Botswana, private schools nearby and other private colleges in the country. In terms of school decline, High School education has not been spared from the effects of the economic meltdown either. This is also what I have observed in Zimbabwe as a teacher; parents are sending their children to former white schools and private schools over historically black schools and learners are also migrating in the same pattern as above. I would want to know why parents are no longer willing to educate their children in historically black schools and to avail possible solutions to these schools to rebuild their positive image amongst parents and children, to retain students and become first choice schools again.

As a teacher, I have observed and heard the same from my critical teacher friends that schools that have declined in academic and sporting achievement in Zimbabwe have been linked to poor leadership and management. According to Hawk (2008), the possible prevention of school

decline could be enhanced by ensuring effective leadership that proactively deals with issues. The literature is extensive on the significant influence of principal leadership on school effectiveness and on student achievement (Stroll & Harris, 2004). Regrettably, poor appointments and a lack of effective leadership were strongly associated with the decline of the study schools in New Zealand (Hawk, 2008). In addition, he notes that some principals, senior leaders and middle managers actively contributed to the decline through their actions, others through their lack of action or inappropriate action and some through both. In Zimbabwe I have noted that if parents are not satisfied with school leadership and management after academic and sporting achievement is declining, they are highly likely not to choose the school for their children and consequently learner migration is high in such schools with learners looking for better schools. I explored the relationship of the school leadership, decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools.

According to Duke and Hochbein (2008), educators know that schools as organisations are likely to decline in time. It is therefore necessary for school management members to be knowledgeable of what cause and constitute school decline and choice for them to be able to notice it in their schools and to prevent and arrest it as soon as it starts. This research on school decline and choice as phenomena will help me as a future school administrator to identify key causes of decline and will put me in a better position to identify the symptoms of decline since forewarned is forearmed. The aspect on school choice will avail the factors that influence parents in their choice and possible solutions of schools in decline to retain and attract students. Another reason for such a research is for sustaining successful schools by availing them with possible causes and solutions to school decline and choice.

Understanding the causes of school decline, choice and learner migration and whether a relationship exist between leadership and management approaches of school principals and causes thereof might deepen our insights about these phenomena. Such insights may assist policy makers and school leadership to come up with possible solutions to decline before schools turn into a spiral decline which is not reversible and costly to save the schools from closing down as the last option (Hochbein, 2011 & 2012).

### **1.3 Aims, objectives and key questions of the study**

The aims and objectives of this study are:

- To solicit the opinions and perceptions of the participants about the possible causes of and relationship between school decline and choice in the selected Zimbabwean schools.
- To explore the role of school leadership in school decline, choice and learner migration in selected Zimbabwean schools.
- To identify what influences parents in choosing a school for their children's education in Zimbabwe.

This study therefore seeks to find answers to the following critical questions:

- What are the causes of decline in selected Zimbabwean schools and if there is a relationship between school decline and choice in the selected Zimbabwean schools?
- How does school leadership and management impact on school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools?
- What are the factors that influence parents in choosing a school for their children's education in selected Zimbabwean school?

### **1.4 Clarification of key concepts**

In order to facilitate a common understanding, the broad definitions of key concepts used in the study are provided below:

### **1.4.1 Leadership**

Leadership is viewed by Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (2009), as a relationship concerned with inspiring followers as individuals or as a group to accomplish organisational goals and aims willingly without being coerced Bush and Glover (2003) make it clear that: leading is a process of steering people in the direction of meeting the desired organisational outcomes. It is noted that for leaders to succeed they should have a vision that include both personal and professional values. Daresh (2001) concurs that leaders take charge of situations in the work environment through motivating their followers towards the attainment of mutually agreed upon goals. Leadership is seen as a process of whereby the school principal influences individuals or groups of teacher, students and staff to willingly work towards the laid down aims and objectives of the school to come up with an effective conducive teaching and learning environment which translates into higher learner academic achievement.

### **1.4.2 Distributive leadership**

Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) note that distributed leadership is an act by members in an organisation of sharing decision making towards the attainment of organisational goals. Distributed leadership is the making of decisions by all members of the organisation at their various positions in the organisations in areas of their expertise (Spillane, *et. al.*, 2004). A leader distributes power in the school by incorporating decisions of various stakeholders, providing guidance and support to staff members to ensure the accomplished of the organisational goals (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p.32). In consideration of the above definitions, distributive leadership in schools is the sharing of power and responsibilities among the teachers, heads of department, deputy principals and the principal, also including the staff and students in decision making in areas affecting their work in schools, leading to an effective organisation through participation and high morale.

### **1.4.3 Instructional leadership**

Spillane, *et. al.* (2004, p.11), note instructional leadership as: “the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning.” The instructional leader makes sure that the core aims and vision of a school are met which are mostly teaching and

learning (Blase, Blase & Phillips, 2010; Smylie, 2010). The principal as an instructional leader has to maintain the success, improve and maintain the culture of teaching and learning in a school. The instructional leader can do this by recruiting the best teachers for the subjects, providing support to novice teachers, availing teaching and learning aids like textbooks and maintain a positive culture of teaching and learning through good behaviour of both teachers and learners (Lunenburg, 2010). Instructional leadership is when the school principal promotes effective learning and teaching to take place through supporting teachers and departments through resources and moral support to critically engage students in class leading to the success of all students in academic and sporting achievement.

#### **1.4.4 Transformational leadership**

According to Landy and Conte (2007), transformational leadership involves the interplay between the leader and his or her subordinates in building team spirit, morale and inspiration. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) define a leader who is transformational in schools as one who has goals and is visionary; encourages staff to further their studies; knows his staff at a personal level; incorporate professional and personal values at work; demands high standard of work and distributes power in decision making. The transformational leader is who gets the best performance out of his followers through motivating them, encouraging team work and improves his staff to their fullest capacity to improve the learners level of achievement.

#### **1.5 Literature review**

This section briefly discusses literature that underpins my study. This was discussed at length in Chapter Two. Reviewing of literature is the process of summing up other studies that are related to your own study. The process describes, summarises, evaluates and clarifies the other studies done by other people in the same field of study. It provides a framework within one can determine his\her own study (Boote & Beile, 2005). The focus of reviewing literature by various scholars, academics and related sources was on school decline and choice.

Hawk (2008) defines a school having a downward trend in academic and sporting achievement overtime as experiencing school decline. School decline is a new phenomenon under study and very few people have researched and are interested in it (Duke, 2008). A lot has been researched

on improving and sustaining successful schools but little researched has been carried out on why and what causes schools to decline around the world (Duke, 2008).

School choice is presented as providing innovation, responsiveness, accountability, efficiency and above all, improvement through competition (Lauglo, 1995; Lubienski, 2006), and choice is often regarded as being positive in and of itself, an essential element of a democratic society (Levin, 1991). It is seen as being of great importance by improving the choices of parents which in turn improved the provision of public education (World Bank, 2004, p.1). Hirschman (1978) conceptualises people's responses to poor service provision in a context of choice in terms of voice and exit: people can try to use their voice to bring about change, or else they can exit, thereby exerting competitive market pressure on the providers which should ultimately benefit consumers.

## **1.6 Theoretical frameworks**

In this section I briefly discuss theoretical frameworks that underpin my study. These were further discussed at length in Chapter Three. The study is underpinned by two theoretical frameworks which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Kanter's (2004) organisational decline. Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline consists of the following five stages. Stage one is when organisations cannot identify the signs and symptoms of decline. Stage two is when organisations are reluctant to act on decline. Stage three is when organisations adopt inappropriate solutions to decline. Stage four is when organisations reaches are in spiral decline. Stage five is when organisations are forced to dissolve or shut down.

The model highlight that decline is in stages and continues from the first stage to the last in a preceding downward manner. The stages are shown to have different implications and costs to the organisation although the costs and implication increases as the decline moves from the initial stage up to the last stage (stage five) which is dissolution or shut down as last resorts. It is also noted that it is sometimes difficult to identify the stage a school in decline might be because the decline might skip or take long in some stages before it reaches the final stage.

The next theoretical framework utilised was that of Kanter (2004). In addition, the theory notes that as problems mount, so does the likelihood that managers would retreat to their own turf and



defend it against change. People tended to blame, avoid one another, become less communicative and managers retreat to their own territory instead of thinking about the school as a whole (Kanter, 2004). Unchecked cycles of decline can easily turn into death spirals. According to Kanter (2004), notes that there are certain factors that make decline worse in organisation like communication break-down among individuals and departments and also poor decisions by managers will further demotivate workers leading to poor commitment. Kanter (2004) highlights that once signs and symptoms of decline have been ignored and the spiral downward trend of decline has started, she notes that it is difficult to put a stop to it and it is very costly to turn around decline into success again.

## **1.7 Research design and methodology**

The section briefly discusses the research design, methodology, research paradigm, sampling, data generation methods, data analysis methods, triangulation, issues of trustworthiness and ethical clearance that underpin my study. These are discussed at length in Chapter Four.

### **1.7.1 Research design**

A design in research is a road map of how the researcher will procedurally generate and analyse data from the participants in responses to the key research questions (Christiansen, Bertram & Land, 2010). It is a data generation procedure which distinguishes a certain study from other observations (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). This is a qualitative study that utilised a case study approach. Data in qualitative research are not in form of numbers but in form of words and what is observed (Punch, 2009). Mhlanga and Ncube (2003) maintain that research in an interpretive paradigm and naturalistic setting a research can be done under a qualitative study. The phenomena is studied in a naturalistic setting and the researcher assigns meaning to the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in terms of meanings people bring to them. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) state that in qualitative research; knowledge is constructed or created by different people who have different interpretations for their subjective realities. Therefore, a qualitative approach gave the researcher data on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration being studied from a subjective perspective of the participants (the school management team members and parents).

### **1.7.2 Research methodology**

O'Donoghue (2007) asserts that methodology in research is the careful selection of ways and instruments to use when generating data to achieved the required data from the study. Therefore, methodology refers to the ways of discovering knowledge, systems and rules for conducting research. The research used a case study approach to investigate the relationship among the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools. An approach like a case study is in a naturalistic setting and can be used to provide rich data of individuals or institutions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), case studies can give a life experience of individuals and can bring the reality of a situation in the researcher's mind. A case study was utilised because it gave the researcher an opportunity to meet the participants in a naturalistic setting in a school and got to share the experiences of the participants on the relationship among school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools.

### **1.7.3 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm represents a particular world view that defines, for the researchers who carry this view, what is acceptable to research and how (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). Within a paradigm it is given: what kind of questions are supposed to be asked? What can be observed and investigated? How to generate data? and how to interpret the findings (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). According to Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), there are three main paradigms: the post-positivist, the interpretivist and the critical paradigm. Creswell (2007) notes that they are four main paradigms the post-positivist, the interpretivists, the critical and the post-modernism paradigm. This shows the controversy on the paradigms that underpins research in education. This study utilised an interpretive paradigm which aimed to understand the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe. Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), state that under the interpretive paradigm, the researchers recognise multiple interpretations as equally valid, results are created and not found and also the use of the dialogical and in-depth exploration methods like interviews.

#### **1.7.4 Sampling**

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) note that the larger group of individuals representing certain characteristics can be represented by a smaller group that can be chosen by a process called sampling. In purposive sampling, often (but by no means exclusively) the researcher uses his discretion to include samples from a particular sample based on the characteristics he is looking for in the sample (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). Sampling was purposive and consisted of two High Schools (Umambo and Tagwinya High) selected on the basis of decline and high learner migration. The sample size included two principals, two deputies and three heads of departments of both schools and ten parents (five from each school). The researcher hand-picked the school management team members because they are most likely to be more knowledgeable on school decline, choice and learner migration, because of their positions in the school. The parents of both schools were randomly sampled but represented all the forms at the school from form one up to six. According to Cohen, *et. al.*, (2011) each member has an equal chance of being included in the sample from the wider population in simple random sampling.

#### **1.7.5 Methods of data generation**

According to Gay, *et. al.*, (2009) data generation is also called fieldwork. Data generation is a process of going into the field to interview the participants, observe the phenomena under study in their naturalistic setting and also reviewing documents to get as much data as possible to answer the research questions. In qualitative research data generated is in words and visual-nonnumeric data to gain insight of the phenomenon under study. According to Gay, *et. al.* (2009), observations, phone calls, personal, questionnaire official documents and interviews, journals, photographs, drawing, recording, informal conversations and email messages and responses, constitute sources of generating qualitative data. This study utilised semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to generate the data needed to answer the research questions. The semi-structured interview as a method of data generation constitutes constructing few interview questions, leaving more room for continuous probing or follow-up questions after the participants have answered a question (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). Therefore, since the researcher explored the relationship among school decline, choice and learner migration, this method was considered more appropriate since it gave the researcher more opportunities to ask follow-up questions and the respondents also asked for clarity on some of the questions and

concepts they did not understand. The observation as a method was used as a confirmation to the data gathered since people's views can be different to what they say or do in the actual situations in schools (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). Documents were reviewed because they provided a record of continuous non-verbal communication which is formal and structured involving school pass rates, staff turnover, learner enrolment and transfers, unlike personal diaries (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011).

### **1.7.6 Data analysis**

The generated data was analysed according to De Vos's (2010) model, which is an amalgamation of Creswell's (1988) analytic spiral model and Marshall and Rossman's model (1999) which state that analysing data is a process of bringing up emergent themes and findings out of the generated data. De Vos (2010) suggests the following stages when analysing data: the procedure of keeping data; generating data and initial analyses; handling acquired information; documents review; creating classes; forms and subjects; recoding the information; trying the found understandings; coming up with other understandings and representations and putting up together the data in a form of a report.

### **1.7.7 Triangulation**

Triangulation typically refers to generating data from a number of different sources (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). In this study it was considered by methods triangulation and triangulation of sources. The use of three different methods of generating data which are interviews, observations and document review is called methods triangulation. In this study, the data obtained from observations were compared with the data obtained from the interviews and document analysis to assess the same aspect of a phenomenon. Further, participants who were included also hold different positions in the school management team (principals, deputies and heads of department) and parents. Triangulation of sources was done by checking for the consistency of what participants said about the same phenomenon over time and comparing the perspectives of participants from their points of view.

### **1.7.8 Issues of trustworthiness**

Christiansen, *et. al.*, (2010) cite trustworthiness as a term used by Guba and Lincoln (1994) for qualitative research. They describe that, in the interpretive paradigm, the concepts of credibility (do the findings reflect the reality and lived experiences of the participants), transferability (to what extent can the research be transferred to another context), dependability and conformability may be used. I used mechanical means to record the data, the use of a voice recorder to record interviews verbatim, meaning transcripts were more accurate than if the researcher simply jotted down notes during the interview. This was to improve trustworthiness and reliability. To ensure trustworthiness of data, multi-methods to generate (interviews, observations and documents review) and cross-checking of data were used. Triangulation of instruments served to verify and validate the generated data. The higher the degree of collaboration of data generated by various instruments, the greater is the degree of trustworthiness of the researched work (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011).

### **1.7.9 Ethical issues**

Christiansen, *et. al.*, (2010) note that research incorporating humans and not animals should consider ethical issues. This is largely because the participants in studies in the social sciences are people who often behave and respond in more complex ways than plants or chemicals. Ethical principles are necessary to be adhered to in such studies. Ethical issues can be: freedom to choose to be or not to be part of the study, the research does not harm participants in any way and does not include financial benefits it will be out of their kindness to participate (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2001, p.66, cited by Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). The authors note that the researcher must respect the autonomy of all participants in the research. To ensure the ethical issues in research and the three principles mentioned above I did the following. First I got the ethical clearance certificate from the University of KwaZulu-Natal which forms the primary assurance of the ethical soundness of this research project. I applied for permission from the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (Chipinge District Education Office) to carry out educational research in schools under their jurisdiction; I also applied for permission from the principals of the two High Schools to carry out the study in their schools. Finally, I got the consent of the participants through writing them letters. I asked them to volunteer to be part of

the study and assured them the freedom to withdraw at anytime. I also assured them in the letters that the study does not harm (non-maleficence) in anyway physical, emotional or social. I also got the participants consent to voice-record their responses and I guaranteed them of their secrecy by using pseudonyms in place of the participants of both schools.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

Limitations are those factors or conditions beyond the reasonable control of the researcher that impinge either on the execution of the study or the validity of the findings, or both (Moyo & Mumbengegwi, 2001). Factors that can pose as weaknesses in any study and which the researcher has little or no control over are called limitations (Simon, 2011). Time and financial constraints narrowed the size of the participants, duration of the research and the geographical area covered. The study relied on voluntary cooperation of participants, which was difficult to secure because of the political situation prevailing in the country. Participants could misinterpret the research questions, deliberately falsify or lack the ability to articulate their views, values or perceptions (Creswell, 2003). Researcher bias and effect during the observations and interviews could have influenced participants' responses (Gay, *et. al.*, 2009). One limitation of this study was that it is often heard that case studies, being idiographic, have limited generalisability (Yin, 2009). The results cannot be generalisable to the rest of the populace of schools in Zimbabwe. The other limitation, due to time constraint was that the respondents were not interviewed to the stipulated times and some gave false information especially on school decline when they were voice-recorded. A further limitation was that the study only included two schools out of the thousand schools in Zimbabwe as a country. However, this study was limited to a qualitative analysis only.

### **1.9 Delimitation of the study**

According to Simon (2011), features that limit the room and term the borders of your research are called delimitations. Such features can be manipulated by the researcher. Delimiting features consist of objectives chosen, key questions of the study, variables of concern, frameworks that underpin the study and the populace the researcher chooses to study (Simon, 2011). The study was carried out at two High Schools in the Chipinge District of Zimbabwe. Both schools are in a rural setting in the Chipinge District. This was done purposively for the following reasons: it was

where the researcher located a historically black school which had declined and also a former white school. It was also because parents in the Chipinge District areas have the chance to select the schools for their pupil's education due to the availability of schools. Tagwinya High School has most of its learners from a disadvantaged community and sometimes the parents fail to pay school fees although it accommodates students from advantaged background families. Umambo High School is for affluent families from all over the District although it accommodates students from the advantaged families from the townships as well. The research was only carried in two schools and the participants were the school management team members (principal, deputies and heads of department) and some parents of both schools.

### **1.10 Organisation of the study**

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the study, the background, purpose and rationale to the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and explanation of the key concepts. The literature review, theoretical frameworks, research design and methodology, delimitation and the limitations were also stated. Thus, it gave an overview of what was expected in subsequent chapters, which is how the study is structured.

Chapter Two focuses on what international, continental and Zimbabwean literature reveals on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration.

Chapter Three outline the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline theory and Kanter's (2004) organisational decline theory.

Chapter Four discusses the research design and methodology where the population, sampling procedure, data generation and data analysis methods are elaborated on. The chapter discussed the trustworthiness and triangulation, ethical considerations and the limitations to the study.

Chapter Five presents the data generated through semi-structured interviews, observations and documents reviewed. The key research questions, the literature reviewed and the adopted theoretical frameworks were utilised to analyse, bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of generated data. Findings, based on this analysis, led to emergent themes, inferences and deductions.

Chapter Six is the final chapter. It gives a summary of the whole study, draws conclusions based on the research findings and makes recommendations and implications for further research.

### **1.11 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced the study and the background of the study. In addition, it contained the purpose and rationale, aims and objective for the study and the key research questions. Furthermore, this chapter dealt with the delimitation and limitations of the study. Key concepts pertinent to the study were clarified and the research methodology and design used were also described. Finally, the chapter gave an outline of the structure of the study. The next chapter (Chapter Two) will give a review of the literature on phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration at an international, continental and Zimbabwean level.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced and gave the background of the study. In addition, it provided the purpose and rationale, aims and objectives for the study and the key research questions. Key concepts pertinent to the study were clarified and the research methodology and design to be used was also described. Furthermore, this chapter dealt with the delimitations and limitations of the study. This chapter outlines the literature that underpins the study. The literature reviewed relevant to the study is on school decline and choice. The literature is divided into international, continental and national literature on school decline and choice in Zimbabwe. The literature to be reviewed last is on managing decline, turning around decline, sustaining success and helping disadvantaged schools and students improve. A chapter summary then concludes the chapter including all the aspects that have been mentioned throughout this chapter.

#### **2.2 School decline**

In this section I review literature on school decline and choice, which is relevant to the study internationally, continentally and nationally.

##### **2.2.1 International literature on school decline**

School decline as a new phenomenon under study presents a serious knowledge gap since less has been studied on it and research has focused much more on school improvement and sustainability at the expense of decline (Duke & Hochbein, 2008). The knowledge gap is on school decline but in the organisational science literature a lot has been written on models, theories and numerous studies in the business sector (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Many factors contribute to why there is little knowledge available on school decline, the first being that teachers and schools are most likely and willing to share their success stories than their failures which limit information on what causes schools to decline in the first place. Another factor is that the school decline as a process needs to be studied over a longer period of time and researchers have found it difficult to come with a working definition of school decline and what constitute it and also identifying schools that are in decline (Duke & Hochbein, 2008).

According to Duke and Hochbein (2008), another factor that leads to a lack of study on school decline is that, teachers in poor academic achieving institutions and institutes on the downward trend in academic performance may not feel comfortable to be interrogated by outside researchers because of the fear of being put on the spotlight of failure. In addition, Duke and Hochbein (2008) note that a negative spotlight related to failure can lead to parents withdrawing their children from the school looking for better education elsewhere. The transfer of students from the declining school to other better schools can accelerate the decline especially if the top performing students are leaving which will further bring down the academic percentage pass rates of the school's public examinations. Furthermore, according to Duke and Hochbein (2008), there has been a lot of confusion on the working definition of school decline due to less research on the phenomenon and researchers have tried to borrow the definition from the organisation science literature. It is also noted that still in the organisation science literature there is no consensus on the definition of organisational decline, how it is measured and what constitute it (Cameron, Kim, & Whetten, 1987). This has made it difficult for researchers to differentiate signs and symptoms to the actual process due to lack of adequate research on the phenomenon Murphy and Meyers (2008). The difference between an indicator and a development element of decline may be contingent ultimately on when investigators conclude that the course of decline starts (Duke & Hochbein, 2008).

In addition, Duke and Hochbein (2008) note that the signs and symptoms of decline are not the same as the actual decline process in schools. The signs and symptoms of decline can be derived from both the internal and external school factors. External factors contributing to school decline include high migration inwards of low performing students, lack of capital, and new policies on school choice. Potential internal causes are the reshuffling of the leadership within shorts space of time, high academic staff turnover, and new policies. Often people confuse the signs and symptoms of decline to think they are the causes. If the school management does not attend to the signs and symptoms of decline, in the long run these will turn into causes of decline itself. Furthermore, Duke and Hochbein (2008) highlight that decline can be predicted in some schools when its workforce is now highly composed of staff near its retirement age and also when new and innovative schools open nearby. Duke (2008) noted that an influx of new students especially from a disadvantaged background, heavily cut amount of resources and new policies were some of the antecedents of decline of once reputable schools in United States of America. F

Another prediction of organisational decline are internal factor (Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Constantly changing the leadership and management can lead to poor and sub-standard performance in organisations. In organisational “indicators” of decline recognised by Murphy and Meyers (2008) were declining social relationships, worker discontent, reductions in provision, and management complications amongst organisation divisions. According to Hochbein (2011), describing the progression of decline in municipal institutes brings up numerous difficulties to the research of school decline. The reason behind is that this term school decline is a process and constitutes a lot of things. In research people have come to agree on the definition of some terms like success and failure but still objective and reliable measurements are non-existent. School decline as a phenomenon still poses a lot of challenges to scholars in terms of its definition, causes, constitute and how to identify a declining school (Hochbein, 2011).

According to Duke (2008) a school is declining if it is failing to meet its aims and objectives over time which is high student academic achievement. School decline can be noted in the academic achievement if it drops by 5% or more in the percentage of students achieving no less than 75% of the examined objectives and also a rise of 5% or more in the percentage of students achieving less than 25% of the examined objectives (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979). A working definition of school decline as such is of relevance to the study of the phenomenon. It links school decline to the student achievement of the end of year standardised examinations done in any country. Utilising such a benchmark allows researchers to match rates and levels of decline across all schools that run identical standardised examinations. For a school to be labeled as “declining,” it should decrease in its student achievement for three successive years.

Hochbein (2011) asserts that knowing how school decline can be identified and measured is important in the sense that school management team members can be assisted in developing strategies that can stop or turn around decline in schools. There is need for school leaders to become researchers also, to understand the phenomenon of decline for example to research why the academic achievement of the school went down that particular year or why has another school performed better than them in terms of the academic achievement. Studies on educational leaders as researchers shows that research allows principals of declining schools to restructure or transform their school processes to reclaim former glory. School decline is stopped through

recognising its early signs and symptoms and acting accordingly in intervention before the decline becomes spiral. Duke (2008) further recognises eleven pointers of decline in schools that teachers should find when there is a difficult and rectify quickly the problems identified. The following are the indicators: homogeneous help; insufficient observation of development; inflexible everyday programme; position complications; unproductive teacher growth; misplaced effort; incompetent management; rushed appointment; overcrowded class; depended on unqualified assistants and additional regulations and tougher corrective measures (Duke, 2008).

In addition, Duke (2008) asserts that iterative relationships between the challenges, conditions, and consequences of a school community account for declining school performance. New or changing government mandates, non-marginal budget cuts, and an increase in the percentage of at-risk students represent examples of possible challenges that facilitate declining school performance. Examples of conditions that mitigate school decline include, but are not limited to, composition of faculty, student discipline, decisions of school leadership, and other internal school factors. Student achievement, dropout rates, student scholarships, and public reputation represent potential consequences of school operation (Duke, 2008).

Furthermore, Duke (2008) highlights that the early identification of the signs and symptoms of the decline, which are the possible causes of decline is crucial in schools for early intervention. Failure to do so, will lead to the decline to self-perpetuate in a downward spiral that is difficult sometimes impossible to put a halt to or expensive to turn around leading to closure of most schools. According to a study conducted by Hawk (2008), there are a number of schools in New Zealand that are entering into, or are already in, a spiral of decline. For some schools, in the past, this downward trend continued until the failure was extreme and damaging the reputation of the school and the people in it. Some schools in New Zealand have been closed because of their poor performance (Hawk, 2008). The knowledge gained about various interventions is relevant to the study of decline because a number of interventions in New Zealand and overseas, have not been entirely successful and school decline has continued either irrespective of the intervention or after a short period of remission (Brady, 2003).

In another study conducted in the United States of America by McDonald (1997), found out that the moving of pupil to achieve school integration within a school district as a public policy has long been an issue of debate. The decision to integrate schools in Boston was ruled in 1974 by

Arthur, W. Garrity, Jr, a US District Judge, in the case of *Morgan v. Hennigan* (McDonald, 1997). In United States of America in Boston public schools, the cause of school decline has been linked to white flight which is the white enrolment decline. According to McDonald (1997), it was established that the Boston School committee had violated the constitutional rights of the plaintiff by “knowingly carrying out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city’s students” (Dentler & Scott, 1981, p.21). The regulating of the transfer of students by the school committee to various institutions based on race consequently led to congested and underutilised institutions. In the ruling it was seen that the Boston school system was unconstitutionally separated (Dentler & Scott, 1981). According to McDonald (1997), following the ruling of moving students within a school district to attain school integration, it met fierce resistance with white opposition arising within communes of all-white neighbourhood school. The concept of white flight was fashioned and popularised by sociologist James Coleman after the ruling of moving students to attain school integration in Boston. Coleman argued that “the court-ordered shifting of white students to achieve racial integration in large cities would accomplish very little. It would encourage whites to leave the public schools and thus an almost all-black or all-minority system would result” (Farley, 1982, p.213). In the 1970s, out-of-town schools in the metropolitan Boston area were closing at an increased speed. Likewise, Catholic schools inside the Archdiocese of Boston were closing at an even quicker rate. The Archdiocese closed 102 schools by 1974 of the 350 that were there in 1965. During this time there was a drastic decline in white student enrolment in Boston city, as a result of the decision of 1974 to move learners to attain integration (McDonald, 1997). White flight was linked to school decline then and according to McDonald (1997), the concept of white flight has continued to be studied by various researchers although Coleman’s findings were debatable.

Duke and Hochbein (2011) assert that in United States of America in a bid to curb school decline, the phenomenon is included in their No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) although little is offered by the regulation in terms of guidance in defining school decline. In its place the NCLB regulation emphasises “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) whether a school does or does not achieve it. The NCLB law comprises of what is usually referred to as a “status model” for assessing answerability. It matches the achievement of subclasses of pupils against a fixed standard recognised at every state. Subclasses beyond the standard are considered as attaining the (AYP); subclasses under the standard are considered as not attaining the AYP (Commission on

No Child Left Behind, 2007). If a school fails to meet the AYP for two repeated years it is subjected to sanctions under the NCLB regulation. Under the same NCLB regulation schools that do not attain the AYP after two repeated years are most likely to experience mass exodus of students to other improving schools since they will be granted the permission to do so by the law. For three consecutive years if a school does not make AYP it is mandated to select a source for extra teaching services for pupils. After four consecutive years of poor academic achievement, a school must apply one of these numerous remedial activities, comprising of changing teachers, introducing new syllabus, lengthening the school day or term end, and altering the interested stakeholders of the school (Duke & Hochbein, 2011).

Furthermore, Duke and Hochbein (2011), note that for schools that fail to meet AYP for five repeated years there are also specifications for their state. The school has to be reintroduced as a charter school, rehiring of all or most teachers and privitising the school to interested stakeholders. In United Kingdom school decline was also catered for through failing schools. An office of Standards in Education was established and released guidelines for the school assessment procedures by 1993. The schools were judged to be either failing, or likely to fail, and these were subjected to “special measures” that reflected most of the concerns related with failure to make AYP in the United States. The office noted that, “school failure is seen to exist: . . . where there is substantial under-achievement. That is where standards are either well below the national averages for schools of that type, or consistently well below pupils’ demonstrable capability, or both” (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005, pp.231-232). Both the NCLB in United States of America and the Office for Standards in Education in United Kingdom were focusing on defining poor or failing schools but did not discuss school decline. Poor school performance is connected to pupils academic achievement on standardised examinations (Duke & Hochbein, 2011).

In Britain, Fink (1999) notes school decline being discussed as ‘failing’ schools with examples of Hackney Downs and the Ridings School taking headlines of most newspapers. The stories were focusing more on change in terms of the decline of the once high performing schools with people blaming each other on the failure of the schools. There appears to be little emphasis upon identifying and celebrating success. In response to the series of declining schools or ‘failing’ schools the new Labour government had to focus on the declining which were 15 and had to

defend the blaming and naming of such school. A proposed solution was to close some of the declining schools and giving them a new lease of life by reopening them under new management and leadership and educators (Barber, 1996). In case of school decline in Britain, Fink (1999) identified Lord Byron High School which used be a new and innovative school of its time which later declined and lost its aims and vision. The school was of high reputation and innovation hosting visitors from outside its state but lost its touch with time due to decline. Today the school is no different to the other regular schools in the Ontario state decline has eroded its competitive advantage. The school's vision of innovation, creativity and experimentation in the 1970s has been substituted by a need of continuity and survival in the 1990s. The loss or change of the initial vision led to the people's curiosity on why the initial advantage has been lost and this was linked to school decline and 'attrition of change' (Fink, 1999).

It is noted that Lord Byron in its inception was a creative and experimental school led by self-motivated leaders and managers, had teamwork and an academically stimulating culture and a persistent determined staff that wanted to make the school a really 'touching' school (Rosenholtz, 1989). The school's creativity revealed many of the advanced ideas that were current in the United Kingdom and North America in 1970. As difficulties set in, blame amplified and the teachers wasted most of their time trying to convince those who opposed their idea of the school of creativity, innovation, experiment and progression. The school lost its touch when it had to pursue its innovative vision beyond their capacity as there was tension between the staff members and the outside ideas in terms of the actual school ethos. A stage called 'overreaching' was reached due to the over stretching of the school's capacity in a bid to maintain its innovative and progressive ideas (Fullan, 1991). Lord Byron factually 'overdid' on creativity and innovation. The process led to a mixed reaction on various the stakeholders who are the staff, community and the government. The teacher's thoughts of a 'perfect' school (Lightfoot, 1983) fast developed into a detachment from the public's idea of an 'actual' school (Metz, 1991). The decline of the school was aggravated by a combination of the factor above, including a fast growth in intake of students which resulted in less attention in teacher recruitment and also congested classroom since the school was now smaller for the new number of students. The increased population of students had also the following contributing factors: less school-parent communication, large number of students absconding classes, increased property damage and a poor culture of teaching and learning (Fink, 1999).

In addition, Fink (1999) highlights that within a few years at Lord Byron High School, the over growth resulted into the decline of both staff and pupil enrolment. The younger staff, innovative curriculum and students were lost to other schools. Staff turnover resulted into low staff morale at the school since there was no time for friendship to build since people were moving in and out of the school at a fast rate. Staff turnover had a huge impact in that the most qualified and enthusiastic left with their expertise and energy. The school curriculum and programmes had to be tailored to match the kind of staff available and field trips were reduced due to the unavailability of motivated staff (Fink, 1999). Furthermore, Fink (1999) notes that another point in the ‘attrition of change’ was caused by ‘heroic’ head departing early and unexpected and the Local Education Authority (LEA)’s poor vision or planning in succession planning. This is often the first crisis for innovative or even very good schools.

Leadership is every important as a starting point in turning around a failing or declining school. The role of the leader is to motivate and boost other staff’s morale to fight against school decline (Cutler, 1998; Turner, 1998; Whatford, 1998). For leaders to successfully turn around decline they need to include every staff in decision making and encourage teamwork and to have a strong shared organisation amongst all staff members of an organisation. Although leadership in schools is important few governing bodies in their respective schools have succession plans to replace current leaders if they die, retire or find another school (Duke & Hochbein, 2011). According to Fink (1999), the Lord Byron case and other schools that have declined show characteristics contributing to decline like change in demographic patterns, new and various policies by the government, external district leadership and management, pupil migration in and out of the school enrolment, no provision for succession in important positions in the school and staff turnover. Although change in demographic patterns contribute school decline there is also a need for schools to prevent further decline by responding effectively to new group of students in terms of their educational needs. The following factors also increases the likelihood of school decline due to poor academic success setting low expectations for both students and staff, poor culture of teaching and learning, and poor discipline of both staff and students at a school (Duke & Hochbein, 2011).



### 2.2.2 Continental literature on school decline

Although there is little research on school decline in Africa, a recent unpublished paper by Mthiyane, Bhengu and Bayeni (date unknown) in South Africa notes, for decades a high school that was the envy of pupils and parents enrolled elsewhere was in decline. Boasting a minimum of 80 to 90 percent pass rates in matriculation and with a loyal and dedicated parent and teacher body, the high school in a Durban township saw as its alumni parliamentarians, business leaders and the like. By 2005 the pass rate of the same school dropped to below 30 percent. Also, according to the article, by 2008 pupil enrolment dropped to almost half its full capacity. Pupil absenteeism and late-coming were rife. This show signs of decline in some South African schools. In addition, several teachers failed to report for duty as internal squabbles over the principal's chair took toll. The decline of this school, together with three other former African high schools in a Durban township, was the subject of research by three University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) academics (Mthiyane, *et. al.*, date unknown).

The as yet unpublished study from UKZN's School of Education reviewed records and documents, interviews with principals, ward managers and teacher unions in an attempt to uncover why former exclusively black high schools, which had a reputation for academic and sporting excellence, declined post-1994. According to Mthiyane, *et. al.* (date unknown), over the past 15 to 20 years, the Matriculation pass rates of the researched schools had slipped to between 20 to 60 percent. Also noted in the unpublished study, school decline was caused by migration of pupils from rural and township areas to urban schools, lack of parental involvement and inadequate support from the KwaZulu-Natal Educational Department. In addition, Mthiyane, *et. al.* (date unknown), also note that with the introduction of educational policies permitting parents to select schools for their children, this has led to decreased enrolment and further school decline of especially township schools. The research indicates that "now that the doors are open, parents are exercising their right to choose. They go for the best. That is why every year enrolment in African townships schools is declining. Pupils are going to the perceived best schools in the suburbs". The cited study also shows that some schools have undergone decline and little has been written on school decline as a phenomenon of study.

According to Davis (2012), the closing of schools in South Africa, especially in the current climate of anxiety over educational shortfalls, is always going to be an emotional issue. And

emotions have indeed been running high ever since the Western Cape education department announced that 27 schools are up for closure in the province. Paradoxically, the rising demand is one of the reasons. There has been a rise in demand of schools in urban areas due to high rural urban migration. Although the Department is closing down schools it should provide high quality education in both rural and urban by modernising the already old schools and build the news that are meeting the current needs of students since there has been a lot of modern improvements on education like the computer age.

In addition, Davis (2012) notes that there are seven proposed schools to be closed are in an urban setting. Three are primary schools are proposed to be closed due to declining numbers of pupils because most of the students have transferred to neighbouring schools in search of better education. Declining schools are losing their pupils to neighbouring better schools. Pupils at a fourth primary school that is in a dilapidated state also have since transferred to nearby schools that are better managed and maintained. The following factors contribute to the closure of most schools in Cape Town, low academic pass rates or extremely poor buildings and high drop-out rates. Education is a basic right and it is the duty of the Department to accommodate these pupils in better, safer schools where they will definitely pass. In support of the above reasons of closing down schools in the Western Cape in South Africa, the reasons submitted by the department in its application to shut down seventeen schools in the province include, among others high absenteeism and dwindling pupil numbers (Cruywagen, 2013). Also, Grant the provincial education Member of the Executive Council (MEC) said, “Our primary objective is to improve the education opportunities of our pupils by providing them with quality education to enable them to live lives they value” (Cruywagen, 2013, p.8).

Furthermore, Davis (2012) identified that the Western Cape education department has denied that there are any ulterior motives behind the mooted closures, saying that some of the reasons why particular schools were being targeted included “ageing school infrastructure, dwindling learner numbers and persistently poor learner outcomes”, and that every student at a school which is closing will be placed in another school. Also noted was that, contrary to public perception, some areas have experienced a falling birth rate over recent years, which means that schools in the area are under-utilised. Grant cites some hangovers from apartheid in terms of schools’ locations, whereby sometimes a number of schools were built in very close proximity in

order to accommodate different races, which can lead to a glut of schools in certain areas. Both of these examples were advanced as illustrations of situations in which schools could be closed and more usefully opened elsewhere. Grant also said that 19 out of 27 schools which have been proposed for closure were leased and that “it makes more sense to own our properties” (Davis, 2012, p.12).

Philander (2012) includes the following question in her article, what will happen to the schools slated to be closed? Head of public works, Gary Fisher said some will be closed in order to be rebuilt. Others could be re-deployed as community resources, like health facilities. He gave the example of a closed Delft school, which is now a thriving community centre. Philander (2012) in the article cites the MEC for Western Cape, Grant saying low Matriculation pass rates and dwindling student numbers are the reasons. Grant also said: “The aim of the closures is to improve opportunities for students by placing them in schools that are better equipped to provide quality education” (Philander, 2012).

Educational concern in Africa are of paramount importance and in South Africa as a country where recently raised after recent international tests showed that 80% of grade five learners are judged to be at “serious risk of not learning to read” (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2011, p.11). In other tests done by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) of grade six reading and eighth for grade six mathematics behind countries of the 15 sub-Saharan African countries in 2007. South Africa came 10<sup>th</sup> out of 15 behind countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Swaziland and Zimbabwe even though South Africa has better facilities, well paid staff, more educational resources and fewer pupils per teacher than most of the other African countries mentioned above (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2011). The evidence provided by such tests should be of great concern to the government officials and policy makers of South Africa being outperformed by poorer other African countries. Long-term benefits can be achieved only if the culture of teaching and learning is improved and improved curriculum deliverance. Furthermore, Van der Berg and Spaul (2011) note that to achieve desired results there should be an improvement inside the classroom, better management, more information to stakeholders and greater accountability are needed on the part of the principal and all staff members on the academic performance of learners. Public examinations should be monitored carefully and teachers should cover specific areas that will be tested in the

examinations on time to prepare learners for both local and international examinations. They also advocated for accountability from all the staff members to both the department and parents on the pupils academic achievement and also on effective teaching and learning to take place in schools (Van der Berg & Spaul, 2011).

In terms of school decline from neighbouring countries teachers have resorted to leaving their countries of origin to doing the profession in other countries in Africa especially South Africa. Research shows South Africa as primarily attracting the Zimbabwean experts, including educators (Wentzel & Tlabela, 2006). South Africa's stable currency, peace and better working conditions and salary has established an international trend where most of the neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Zambia and Swaziland are losing their educators migrating in to South Africa in search of the above mentioned factors

In Kenya, primary education enrolment was drastically increased by 22% in the first year alone after the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) which eliminated school fees from all government primary schools. In Kenya the large numbers of students are transferring from government schools to private schools and this has been linked to the poor quality of education in public schools resulting from the introduction of the FPE leading to school decline (Nishimura & Yamano, 2008). In Kenya school decline has been noted when the policy of Free Primary Education was introduced leading to the decline in quality of education of the government schools which gave rise to private schools as alternative when choosing the choice of education of the affluent children by their parents. The introduction of FPE programme in Kenya improved the access of primary education especially to the poor although they are such other factors that are still hindering the educational attainment of many children like food and school uniforms which imposes a challenge on the provision of quality education remains in Kenya. A study by Uwezo (2010), found that students in private schools are outperforming those in public schools by far which was evident in regular dominance of private schools in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) has additionally highlighted a matter of the rising disparity in quality between government and private schools. Although the government has introduced the FPE to accommodate the poor more has to be done since the poor still suffer when the rich enrol their children in private schools which have better quality education than public schools. The policies

should be introduced to reduce the gap between the private and public schools in terms of the educational quality (Tracyann, 2004).

Tracyann (2004) outlines that the poor performance of public pupils in the KCPE can have a negative impact in their future acting as a barrier to access secondary school. Evidence shows that from the 2004 KCPE examinations shows that more than 50% of private school candidates qualified for secondary school by scoring over 250 points, while only less than 50% of students in government schools qualified. The difference in the academic achievement between private and government primary schools has also led to the continued overrepresentation of private school graduates in the top National Secondary schools. In a bid to try and address the private-public performance a quota has been introduced on the number of private school graduates that can be admitted into the National schools. The policy has potential negative consequences of promoting social stratification in the secondary school system where the cream from the private primary education will still attend separately from the poor who cannot afford private secondary education and the poor will still attend the poor quality secondary education in the public secondary from the public primary schools leading to a continuous vicious cycle in the long-run.

Furthermore, according to Lassibille, Tan and Sumra (2000), private secondary education in Tanzania is shown to be stimulated by the diversification of education as a worldwide pattern. As Bray (1996) notes, that private education increases due to: inadequate infrastructure and resources to maintain government delivery of goods and services; the people's views that government education is now inferior; the increase of parental choice in education; and increased accountability of schools to their stakeholders. There various reasons that have led to the expansion of private education in the world. In Africa economic challenges have been the overruling factor in the rise of private education; in richer countries the rise comes from the need of effectiveness, increased consumer choice and school accountability to their stakeholders. The rise of private secondary education in Tanzania is evidence of school decline in Tanzania in terms of inadequate infrastructure and resources to sustain government delivery of education and also the people's view that public education is in decline (Lassibille, *et. al.*, 2000). School decline is evident in Tanzania shown by the poor infrastructure and the dilapidated state of both private and government schools. Only 13 percent of the buildings are said to be in decent state in the government schools and a mere 18 percent in the private schools. In the private sector, the

excellent infrastructures are the eating halls, but even so, just more than a quarter are allegedly to be in a good condition (Lassibille, *et. al.*, 2000).

In addition, Lassibille, *et. al.*, (2000) note that private education has expanded and since its more expensive children from poor backgrounds have been denied this education due to financial constraints and staff turnover has been high in favour of private schools increasing academic gap of private-public secondary schools. Also, noted by Lassibille, *et. al.*, (2000) is that the reduction in government expenditure on education after the mid-1980s had an adverse effect on learner admissions, with the total enrollment decreasing from more than 95% in 1980 to less than 70% by 1996. At least 33% of learners who entered the first grade failed to complete the 7 years of schooling in the process. To increase parental choice in education the Tanzanian government in the mid-1980s implemented some policies that encouraged the formation of private schools.

Moswela (2004) asserts that discipline in Botswana secondary schools has increasingly become poor contributing to school decline and poor academic achievements. In addition, Moswela (2004) identifies a correlation between the behaviour of students and their academic achievement and concluded that if the misbehaviour is high their also higher chances that the students will not achieve academically. The National Conference on Teachers Education (1997) notes that academic achievement of most schools has been caused to decline due to poor students' behaviour. Furthermore, Moswela (2004) highlights those schools should be welcoming and safe for both students and teachers for effective teaching and learning to take place. The general behaviour of students should not be violent and should not disrupt the teaching and learning that has to benefit the rest of the students. Through good and effective leadership a school can maintain a good culture of teaching and learning and display best behaviours from both the teachers and the students. According to Ignathios (2003), resource input factors tend to have an impact on school effectiveness in the developing countries. Important inputs include financial or physical resources, the quantity and quality of teachers and the availability of textbooks on student outcomes or academic achievement.

### **2.2.3 Zimbabwean literature on school decline**

Little has been written about school decline as a phenomenon of study in the Zimbabwean context. Bate (2009) cites James McGhee the Ambassador to Zimbabwe of United States (US),

when he described Zimbabwe as a failed state. He notes diseases like malnutrition and cholera taking lives with government institutions such as hospitals and schools facing closure. He also identified high level rates of unemployment of over 80%, with prices of basic goods doubling every day and people resorting to barter trade since the currency has virtually become worthless. He notes schools have been closed citing decline, causing them to close because school decline is a process and it takes time until it leads to school closure.

According to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) news (2007), a department of the United Nations which operates with the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) of Zimbabwe notes that 'more and more children are unable to afford going to school'. In addition, lack of teachers and facilities means classrooms remain overcrowded (Mhondoro, 17, April, 2007, IRIN). Zimbabwean education has got worse especially in the rural areas and this has been aggravated by the further weakening of the economy with the government failing to support most of its important sectors including education. This shows signs of decline in Zimbabwean schools. Also, according to the article, "evidence on the ground shows that the standards of education among rural communities are failing sharply and one does not rule out the possibility of a collapse if there is no active campaign to revitalise schools in these areas", Gordon Chavhunduka, former Vice-Chancellor of University of Zimbabwe told IRIN (17, April, 2007). This shows schools in Zimbabwe have undergone decline as organisations. Due to the weak economy Zimbabwe as a country has failed to avail resources to its educational sector to renovate and improve the existing infrastructures worse off to build new and more schools in areas that have no access to education (Chavhunduka, IRIN, 17, April, 2007).

Also, noted by the IRIN was that the academic achievement of distant societies were mostly lower than the standard. Donald Jonas [not his real name], an educator at Kutama High school articulated that the school lacked infrastructure and lacked adequate resources to facilitate effective teaching and learning to take place like classrooms and text books resulting in poor academic results. This shows school decline, lessons of a secondary school being carried out at a primary school. Also, noted was a statement, "Even though we teach science subjects, we don't have a laboratory and we resort to teaching theory only, being one of the reasons why it is difficult to have good passes. Besides, how can the pupils be expected to pass when they are

supposed to share classrooms with primary school pupils and sometimes learn under trees?” Jonas was quoted asking by the IRIN.

According to Tendi (2009), teachers in Zimbabwe, have come under attack from Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) supporters under political squabbles and accusation of conniving with the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Many educators have been victimised for various reasons such as being accused of being traitors because of being members of the opposition and also for being part of the electoral members they were suspected of rigging ballot votes in favour of the opposition. They have been accused of favouring the opposition and rigging elections for the MDC. In terms of statistics by 2008 during the elections more than 2500 fled the country for their lives and these can be calculated to be almost staff of 500 schools and hundreds of schools were closing and a lot of teachers being harassed and charged with false election charges (Tendi, 2009, p.27). However, this has led to school decline and poor culture of teaching and learning due to the fleeing of qualified educators to the neighbouring countries in pursuit of a safe working environment and better working conditions (Tendi, 2009).

In support of the above, Cole (2010) notes that Zimbabwean educators especially in the rural areas have their rights politically victimised and others even lost their lives since the year 2000. Consequently, Zimbabwe lost most of its experienced and qualified educators fleeing to neighbouring countries in fear of their lives and better peaceful working environment. The government needs to remunerate the teachers well to retain the most qualified and experienced from leaving the country and also to lure back those who have already left the country. Education is well delivered to our children by teachers in safe working environments which are free from political violence and victimisation. There is a need a new Zimbabwean constitution which highlights the importance of education and makes it a right of every Zimbabwe child to get education. In addition, Cole (2010) also notes that the inadequate capital in the educational sector has led to the deterioration of most government infrastructures and there is no money to renovate the old ones and also to build new ones, incompetent teachers and school managers, lack of textbooks and corruption of senior educational government officials. Bringing back the previous first class educational system may take time or might not become a reality again since



lack of water and electricity is also further aggravating the educational problems because these are essential for any school to be functional.

Furthermore, Cole (2010) notes that the educational system in Zimbabwe as a sector was not spared by the collapse of the economy that began since 2000. The once admired educational system is in decline with teachers poorly remunerated and most leaving to neighbouring countries in search for better working conditions. Others have transferred to better paying sectors within the economy and some have become self-employed leaving the education system brain drained with new and underqualified staff leading to poor academic results and the further decline in the quality of education.

According to Pollock (2010), sometime in March 2010 an organisation Women and Men of Zimbabwe WOZA took the streets in challenging the minister's decision of banning incentives for teachers by parents since it was retaining teachers in schools to teach their children. The minister said that: "There has been lawlessness in the education sector and demanding incentives, unless approved as levies, is illegal because it is extortion, but if incentives are to be scrapped off, I have no doubt there will be no classes because teachers will leave the profession." Due to the poor salaries of teachers, schools have resorted to giving teachers incentives to keep them in schools and this shows school decline since parents have to fork out extra cash to keep teachers at work, which should be the job of the government. In addition, Pollock (2010) also notes that the payment of incentives by parents to teachers has managed to keep the Zimbabwean education sector functional otherwise it would have lost its teachers due to the poor salaries they are getting from the government. The incentives are cushioning the poor salaries to retain teachers in schools. A statement by Christian Karega to Media Global, "Education is just one of the many resources that have been severely impacted by Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political situation. When we started the Zimbabwe Education Fund in 2008, the majority of rural schools were closed. When schools finally reopened, the government had a difficult time supporting schools, so parents were left to rebuild the devastated school system on their own."

Faul (2009) notes that the Zimbabwean education system has been on the verge of decline and this has been evident in the public examination results that shows a sharp decline from 2005 there were above 70% then in 2006 they dropped to a mere 11%. Bush and Oduro (2006) postulate that most African principals face daunting challenges when they have to manage under-

resourced schools without adequate infrastructure and few qualified support staff. In most cases, including Zimbabwe, this scenario is made worse by the fact that there are no formal staff development programmes for school principals (Masuku, 2007). Ngwenya, Baird, Boonstopel and Padera (2008) note that since the economic collapse in Zimbabwe, the government support to the educational sector has drastically been reduced resulting in inadequate budgets for resources and teacher salaries which has led to mass exodus of teachers to neighbouring countries in search of better working conditions. The economic crisis has affected the education system negatively in that children are no longer receiving that quality of education they did due to reduced availability of resources and support from the government. Ngwenya, *et. al.*, (2008) note that School-Community is a process of incorporating parents in the school management especially in the rural areas. There are a lot of things the community can do as an active role in promoting education in rural areas. The community members can help in infrastructure development by channeling in resources or providing labour in building classrooms, they can raise school fees for struggling learners and also brain storm in parent-school meeting raising important issues that needs attention from the school leadership and management. A strong community-school relationship increases ownership of the school on the part of parents and they will be willing to provide the school's strength and weaknesses to make a school a better place for their learners. The school-community programmes include all the educational stakeholders who are the school management team members, councilors, district administrators, parents, learners and members of the school development committee.

Since independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has taken pride in the high literacy rate of its population because of the massification of education (Chisaka & Mavundutse, 2006). According to Mlahleki (2010), Zimbabwe has consistently regarded education as a basic human right, a basic human need and an economic investment in human beings who are the means and ends of all economic activities. This policy is enunciated in the country's Education Act of 2006 (Chapter 25). However, of late, the public has been critical of the quality of education provided, especially in high schools. Sachiti (2006) reports a case where students were incited by parents to boycott classes in protest against the poor standards of teaching and learning at the school. Also, a public outcry about the uncultured school graduates in the country's education system was noted. Parents and guardians continue to raise questions concerning teaching methods, the school

curriculum, the discipline of both teachers and students and other observable effects of ineffective education process.

Shumbayaonda and Maringe (2000) notes that high school principals in Zimbabwe need to develop a school vision for teaching and learning as a top priority. Indeed, the poor academic performance in both the Ordinary and Advanced level examinations has raised such great concern among stakeholders that the instructional leadership of the school head is viewed as a panacea to the extremely challenging task of creating a culture of teaching and learning that can see a redress of the situation.

## **2.3 School choice**

In this section I discuss school choice and its relationship to school decline in three broad subheadings which are internationally, continentally and nationally focusing on Zimbabwe as the country of study.

### **2.3.1 International literature**

Private education has grown rapidly on a worldwide scale over the past ten years (Tooley, 2001). The growth of private schooling has been particularly dramatic in developing countries. In Cote d'Ivoire, 57 per cent of secondary school enrolment is in private sector (Tooley, 2001). In other parts of Africa the same trend is obvious: during the end of the 1990s in Zimbabwe, nearly 90% of primary and over 80% of secondary school pupils were in private schools, as for Tanzania, over 50% of secondary school pupils and while in Botswana, over 70% of secondary school pupils were attending in private schools (Tooley, 2001).

School choice is presented as providing innovation, responsiveness, accountability, efficiency and above all, improvement through competition (Lauglo, 1995; Lubienski, 2006), and choice is often regarded as being positive in and of itself, an essential element of a democratic society (Levin, 1991). It is seen as being of great importance to each and every one of us but also collectively: increasing consumer choice (World Bank, 2004, p.1). Hirschman (1978) conceptualises people's responses to poor service provision in a context of choice in terms of voice and exit: people can try to use their voice to bring about change, or else they can exit, thereby exerting competitive market pressure on the providers which should ultimately benefit

consumers. Gorard, Taylor and Fitz (2002) consider that when a school is in a downward trend of decline it becomes less popular and pupils will start moving out of the school joining other reputable schools leaving the school in a spiral decline in terms of learner enrolment. Gorard, *et. al.*, (2002) assert that the process above of declining schools further declining is termed 'spiral of decline'. It can be explained as a process where the school continuously decline in enrolment so as its academic performance since the best usually transfer first leaving the school with poor learners and those who have lesser options. If this scenario continues over time the school will lose its reputation and parents will prefer sending their children to alternative schools even if the school is within their reach until the school's enrolment is too low that closing it becomes an option.

In support of the above, Duke (2008) notes that the NCLB policy as a remedy to ensure that learners get the best education allowed students to transfer from low-performing to better schools within districts. It was also noted that the students who are quick to move out of those low-performing schools are the high-achievers. This has a negative effect on the declining school which will lead it into a spiral of decline; it will continuously lose its best staff as well as its top achieving students leaving and remaining with low-achievers which will result into the eventual closure of the school. In support studies show that reputable schools are too selective when it comes to recruiting students because they will be after the best students who are easy to teach which will leave low achieving students attending also poor schools which can result into a vicious circle (Lubienski, 2006; Van Zanten, 2009). Choice of schools is also affected by the parental well-being, parents who are rich tend to be well informed about the best schools and will go out of their way to have their children in such schools even if they are very expensive. The same is true due to financial constrains poor parents send their children to the nearest school even if the education is worst there, they have less choice. Also the level of education of the parents has an impact on school choice. Well educated parents would want their children to attend at the best schools because they understand the importance of education and on the other hand less educated parents also see education as less important such that they are not too particular of where their children acquire their education (Hastings, Kane & Staiger, 2005). In addition, Hastings, *et. al.* (2005) note that research has shown that differences between schools in terms of academic achievement and socio-economic backgrounds can be increased school choice in most countries.

According to Burke (2013), there are a lot of benefits that accrue by increasing school choice: increased student pass rates; increased study completion percentages; safer schools for both teachers and students; increased parental involvement in their children's academic life and public expansion and increased societal interest in education; improves efficiency of public schools through competition, improved pass rate for pupil exercising school choice and for those pupils studying in government schools; and utmost essentially, gives parents the chance to have their educational options met of their children with unique learning needs and difficulties. In United States of America (USA), policies of school choice have been of greater political concern since the integration of societies to achieve desegregated communities (Hsieh & Shen, 2001). School choice exists in both private and public educational sectors. The community through school choice is given the right to choose the schools that they afford and meet the best needs of their children. A voucher system has formalised school choice in United States of America where the government can even fund learners in public schools to attend private schools if they do well.

Burke (2013) notes that to increase school choice, the United States government has introduced private owned schools that should educational governing authorities regulations and standards. These schools are called Charter schools they have a lot of advantages over public schools because they are self-managed and controlled. These schools offer choice to parents since they act as a substitute to government schools. In support of the above, Mtshali (2013) describes that in USA, contract schools are referred to as charter schools and were established in 1991. Also, Mtshali (2013) notes that they comprise just more than 6 percent of the USA public schooling system. A majority of them are in poor areas and their performance is on par with public schools and in some cases better. As in USA public schools, pupils in charter schools do not pay fees (Mtshali, 2013). Children from the less privileged families in USA have their choice of attending private education increased through scholarship availed by the government using public money to fund their studies if they perform well in public schools. Friedman (1962) notes that school choice increases efficiency through competition between public and private schools "a great widening in the educational opportunities open to our children." Through school choice public schools have been forced to improve in order to retain and lure more students and also not to lose funding since their enrolment was now on the negative since learners were opting for private schools over them (Burke & McKenzie, 2007).

According to Gray (2012), the introduction of charter schools as an American educational policy introduced some form of competition in the delivery of education and also as a remedy for public schools. In addition, Gray (2012) notes that parents now have a wide range of choice from the inter and intra-district government schools, voucher schools, magnet schools and the private charter schools. Recently introduced form of school choice policy in terms of voucher and charter schools have been less studied and less is known about them (Gray, 2012). Comparison between charter schools and public schools in terms of academic performance is still yet to be studied although most people are opting for charter schools since their establishment.

According to Burke and McKenzie (2007), experiences across a number of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries notes that the better educated the parent are the more they need to exercise school choice and send their children to the best schools available. It is noted that the rising performance of most successful school is due to a high intake of advantaged students who are high academic achiever and this has a risk of widening the gap between under-performing and highly-performing schools. The widening of the gap between the two is often increased due to school choice because if parents choose to transfer their children from an under-performing school to a better school. The under-performing school is likely to decline further because the parents of the remaining students are most likely to be less concerned about the academic achievement of their children so no one will voice for improvement and change. School choice has been shown to have left some school disadvantaged when they lost students and staff to other schools that are better performing after its introduction as a policy in some countries (Lamb, 2007). Burke and McKenzie (2007) highlight that parents are making informed decision on school choice basing on the information they get on the qualities of certain schools, the academic pass rates on government web sites and the media (News, newspapers and journals).

The Swedish educational system has been on the downward trend in terms of pupils' academic attainment and quality and the contributing factor has been the lack of school choice. The private sector was expensive and only gave a choice to the rich who had lots of money to spare on their children's education. The educational system was monopolistic there was no room for affordable private school and pupils needs were seen to be the same although they are different. For all the rest, the school was one monolithic organisation in which all students were considered to have

the same needs and to learn the same way. The absence of school choice led to inadequate innovations and creativity in terms of teaching and how to acquire knowledge that were used to various pupils' needs (Burke, 2013). In Sweden the voucher system was first introduced in 1992 although it met opposition until 1994 when it was fully accepted as a measure to increase school choice. This voucher system was similar to the Danish 'taximeter' system which saw both private and public schools to receive equal financial benefits depending on the number of students. This system granted the parents of Sweden to choose where to use their vouchers of their children whether private or public schools (Rangvid, 2008; Lundahl, 2002a; 2002b).

Burke (2013) asserts that in Sweden before the introduction of the voucher system nearly all learners were in government schools. An education market emerged based on the Swedish and Scandinavian tradition of social justice and equality. The market allowed all families from various backgrounds to have an equal opportunity of choosing between private and public education for their children. The educational market was based on innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and competition (Burke, 2013).

According to Baird (2009), the deterioration of the quality of the government school education has driven the demand of private schools since Indian parents believe that better education leads to better opportunities in life. The increased demand of better quality education by most parents in India has led to the development and expansion of the 'Low-Fee Private' (LFP) schools which are privately established and managed (Srivastava, 2006) catering to the poorer strata of society. The pace of this expansion is ever increasing as dissatisfaction with failing government schools intensifies (PROBE Team, 1999; Kingdon, 2005). Some argue that in the light of the Education for All (EFA) targets, any expansion in provision should be regarded favourably, and that private schools should be encouraged due to high parental demand. Parents feel that under current conditions, LFP schools are preferable because of prima facie evidence of better quality; however, there also exists serious mistrust of these institutions as they are perceived to be focused primarily on profit, and are under the control of a single individual, meaning that they could close down at any time (Harma, 2009).

Baird (2009) notes that LFP schools are highly responsive to parents' demands for quality education, and are often very good at producing decent results with limited resources. The LFP schooling sector demonstrates that competition can be a positive force in promoting good education. When principals are motivated by competition to improve and expand their schools and teachers are rewarded for hard work and improvement, they are able to achieve a lot with very little. Creating a regulatory environment where such incentives influence a growing number of schools and teachers should be seen as an effective and not very costly way of improving the quality of our schooling. In support, Baird (2009) notes that parents have identified that private schools are out-performing public schools in academic achievement. Another finding is that the infrastructure of private schools is far much better than that of public schools so as their students' performance although private schools do less in terms of addressing social classes and gender issues. Teacher absenteeism is also higher in public schools than in private schools which is also another reason for parents choosing private schools over public schools (Baird, 2009).

### **2.3.2 Continental literature on school choice**

Education is a basic human right in all parts of the world and is provided by both the private and the public sectors of any economy. In South Africa the public sector the government is the largest educational provider ever since and will continue being so and enrolls most learners and teachers in the country. There is also evidence that parents are willing and interested in seeing the private schooling expanding since it gives them choice in terms of better education for their children since it has been small and for the rich since it is beyond the reach of most South Africans due to the exorbitant prices charged (Bernstein, 2012).

Kitaev (1999) highlights that schools in the private sector are formal as public schools but the difference is on how they are managed and funded. Private schools are funded by other stakeholders other than the government who fund and control them meeting the South African education standards and policies. The term 'independent' school has come to replace 'private' in many parts of the world (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2002). James (1991) argues that parents from around the globe are driven to choose between public and private schooling for their children in search for alternative type of education and better education. Parents in developing countries opt for private school education over public school because they believe private education is of better quality. In developed country people choose private schooling as an alternative type of education



because in private schools they are learner centred whereas in public schools they are results oriented.

The following are demand factors, like unmet demand has historically been a feature in black communities, whereas differentiated demand has been a factor in white communities. In recent years, differentiated demand has increased significantly in black communities. 'Pull' factors could include smaller class size and the perception of greater answerability and improved value of schooling in private schools (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2002). This independent school sector grew rapidly between 1990 and 2003. It also transformed from schools serving predominately the rich, and the white learners to a more accommodative sector catering for all races and students from various backgrounds and social classes. This pattern of demand accords with the main findings of Tooley (2001) with regard to private education in other countries. A recent typology is Kitaev's (1999) qualitative grouping of five forms of private schools in sub-Saharan Africa, on the basis of their origins and purpose: community, religious, profit-making, spontaneous and expatriate schools. According to Muller (1992, p.340), the defining characteristics of the traditional private schools were 'that they were predominately white, predominately church-affiliated and the Catholic and Jewish schools aside - they self-consciously promoted a certain Anglo-centric ethos'.

In South Africa after the Soweto uprisings, the first of the 'new' private schools began to emerge. These schools were created principally for black learners and were established as a direct response to apartheid. Despite their common purpose, there was significant heterogeneity among the new private schools. Some of the more prestigious were established to educate the 'black cream', or black middle class that was beginning to emerge at this time (Muller, 1992, p.342). Also commercially-run schools were established in urban areas specifically to educate black students who were unable or unwilling to access education through the Bantu education system (Muller, 1992). Exponents of marketisation in South Africa (as elsewhere) have claimed that the introduction of market forces can help to increase choice for the consumers of education. It is also suggested that it can act as a means of redressing past inequalities. These arguments are critically considered in relation to the experiences of black pupils both within the schools themselves and within the wider educational system. It is argued that a marketised approach

towards desegregation may have increased choice for whites and for a minority of blacks, but has not increased choice for blacks as a whole (Tikly & Mabogoane, 1997).

Bernstein (2012) asserts that to ensure that school choice exerts pressure on public and private schools to improve their performance, parents need credible information about the schools they are considering. One way to achieve this is to require all schools (public and private) to publish their results from the previous year and make these accessible to local parents. In this respect, South Africa's introduction of the Annual National Assessments (ANAs), which were written in 2011 by all learners in grades 3 and 6, are to be welcomed. Public schools are required to give parents their children's results. In addition, Bernstein (2012) notes that public schools need greater freedom to respond to competition from other schools. They should be able to attract the best teachers. Principals should have the authority to manage the schools as they see fit, and public schools which fail to produce results and attract learners should run the risk of losing staff posts and being shut down. The most important issue in promoting quality education is accountability. This must apply to both private and public schools. It is in the public interest that private schools should meet reasonable registration conditions, and those qualifying for subsidies must be held accountable for the public funds they receive (Bernstein, 2012).

In most rural black communities school choice is almost non-existent resulting in congested and limited schools to enroll all the learners. Consequently this has led to the creation and expansion of substitute private schools in cities and towns to cater for the excess demand in rural areas and providing the learners with a much more better education than rural schools (Muller, 1992). The unequal distribution of education resources during the apartheid system led to historically black schools being poor and lacking infrastructure. This has prompted the choice for former historically white schools by most black parents who can now afford them not considering the fees and the transport costs but in search of the better quality of education and infrastructure for their children. Most learners attending to such schools take a considerable time on the road travelling to most of these schools. School choice still exists to most white families in South Africa in terms of the best schools although it has also expanded to most black minorities who can now afford to send their children to former white schools. This expansion of school choice of former white schools to blacks has been promoted by the increased decline in white enrolment

which has threatened some of these schools to close which has helped the desegregation issue in South Africa (Muller, 1992).

In post-Apartheid South Africa, school choice has been the major development which has afforded most middle class parents an exit option away from most township schools into some of the private former white schools (Msila, 2011). In search of better quality education for their children most black parents have resulted in sending their children to school outside the townships. Township school flight has resulted in the further decline of township school and worsening of their quality of education disadvantaging most of the black learners who cannot afford to find schools outside the townships (Msila, 2011). School choice has also widened the gap between poor and affluent schools. Poor schools have continuously become poorer and are left in further decline because they will lose financial able and top students to better schools leaving in a spiral of decline. Msila (2005) notes that educational quality has fallen in most deserted historically black African schools or township schools as standards appears greater in most historically white schools. School choice in South Africa especially the township exit option has led to schools being segregated according to the disadvantaged and advantaged. Kelly (2007) asserts that school choice can result in the widening of the gap between the disadvantaged and advantaged. In addition, it has been noted that school choice can be best exercised by the advantaged and least benefit the poor since they cannot exercise it and they are the majority resulting in school decline of most school (Msila, 2005; William & Echolls, 1992). In support of those parents who afford to choose schools for their children as a way of desegregating the society that was created by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Many years after apartheid the black schools have shown to be exclusively for blacks since they have failed to attract any white learners but the former white schools have managed to attract most of the black learners. This show the after effects of the Apartheid era that still haunt the current democratic government in terms of educational policy planning and development (Msila, 2011). The government should address the educational imbalance of the historically black schools and former white schools to cushion the quality of the majority of South African education since most of the learners are still trapped in the poor academic achieving township schools. Comparison can be done of school choice in the USA and in SA. In USA, Corwin and Schneider (2005) notes that: usually all parents regardless of their race and social status are in need to move from the inner city where crime rates are higher, violence is a norm, high rates of drug abuse, or incompetent staff and

underqualified educators. These schools are usually found in disadvantaged and minority communities... A large number of black pupils than white pupils have transferred from their government schools to benefit from the government school open enrolment plans available in most towns (Corwin & Schneider, 2005).

In a most recent article by Mtshali (2013), she notes that in South Africa, to increase school choice to parents there is room for a new schooling sector that can provide high-quality education to low-income communities. She notes that a research study on South Africa's education system by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), entitled *The Missing Sector: Contract Schools*. The study proposed the introduction of "contract schools" in South Africa (SA) which, if implemented properly, could provide quality education at a much cheaper cost and improve access to quality education for under-serviced and disadvantaged communities (Mtshali, 2013, p.5). They described contract schools as government-funded schools that are privately owned. This model, though well established in developed and developing countries, is absent from SA's schooling sector (Mtshali, 2013).

In Kenya, Nishimura and Yamano (2008) identify an increase of almost 7% by 2007 from 2004 in the number of students attending private schools especially from the rich families. The researchers conclude that the educational standards, accessed by the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination percentages at the school level, showed a positive effect on the choice of private education. The transfers of students were not fixed pupils were transferring in search of better education from public to public, public to private and private to private schools. Students from advantaged backgrounds have a greater chance of transferring to private schools than students from disadvantaged families. The Kenyan government has to fight decline in public primary schools since the introduction of the FPE to match the educational standards of the private primary schools (Nishimura & Yamano, 2008).

Similarly, according to Tracyann (2004), in his study in Kenya, he highlights that one common characteristic of adolescents schooling in developing countries is that it is not free (and generally, not mandatory) and a choice set of schools is available. These characteristics suggest a fresh look at the issue of school choice and student outcomes. On the supply side, varying fees and tuition inevitably lead to varying qualities of the same education product. On the demand side, parents are not only making a choice about which school to send their children to (as is the

case in the US), but they are also making a decision on whether to educate their children. The education costs borne by households make this decision, whether to send their children to school, an investment issue. In this environment, parents become more concerned with the likely outcome of their children whether they will complete the necessary levels and are there positive and attainable returns to their education (Tracyann, 2004).

In addition, Tracyann (2004) notes that if parents perceive that they will lose on this investment, and then they may opt not to pursue education for their children. On the other hand, if they perceive a gain to this investment, they are expected to consider the optimal number of years as well as the choice of school based on the varying qualities. Given the decision to invest, then school choice and the quality of the school are relevant to the educational outcomes faced by these adolescents. Research on schooling in developing countries have focused on a variety of educational outcomes such as student performance (Case & Deaton, 1999; Glewwe & Jacoby, 1993b), and have found that the typical school characteristics such as student-teacher ratios, do affect the performance of students on end of year examinations. As a result of the less restricted nature of schooling in developing countries in general, issues of school choice are not limited to private and public schools but extend to choice among public schools. Research has typically focused on the direct relationship between school quality and student performance on standardised tests (Glewwe & Jacoby, 1993b; Jimenez & Sawada, 1999). This emphasis stems from a need to identify the factors that directly influence student achievement. Additionally, Glewwe and Jacoby (1993b), in their analyses have examined jointly, student achievement and school choice as functions of household characteristics and school quality. In a comparison of public and private schools, private schools are found to be better efficient since they seem able to avail better education at affordable prices (Jimenez, Lockheed & Paqueo 1991). Additionally, parents are attracted to high quality schools (Glewwe & Jacoby, 1993a), and they do make this distinct choice when faced with subsidised and non-subsidised private schools (Mizala & Romaguera, 1999).

In Tanzania, in terms of school choice, the private sector educates more than 50% of all secondary school pupils, a greater percentage than the average of 30 percent in other countries in Africa (Lassibille, Tan & Sumra, 2000). The involvement of the government in decision making the provision of education by the private sector varies in degree according to various countries.

In some countries private schools are sponsored and managed by non-government interested stakeholders whereas public schools are funded out of the tax revenues and managed by the government. Other countries subsidize private schools although the government relinquishes the power to private stakeholders to run and manage the schools within the acceptable government educational standards. The way private and public schools are managed is different in Tanzania (Lassibille, *et. al.*, 2000). In addition, Lassibille, *et. al.*, (2000) note that the public sector schools comprise of community and government schools. The two receive are fully funded by the government for the running costs although the schools also source funds through charging school fees and boarding fees. The difference between the two is on construction costs. The costs of construction of government schools come from the government whereas for community school the local communities are responsible. The private schools that make up the private sector are diverse but have school fees and capital cost self-funded as unique characteristic they share. Most private schools are established by the community organisations and various churches although a few have been opened by individuals or groups as non-profit schools (Lassibille, *et. al.*, 2000).

Furthermore, Lassibille, *et. al.*, (2000) identifies poor educational provisions by the public schools as the expansion of private secondary sector in Tanzania. A survey of secondary schools in Tanzania of more than 100 schools over a period of two years (1994-1996) shows a minimal difference in the teaching methods that students are exposed to in both the private and public schools. There are things that can be comparable between the two which are classroom size, infrastructure, availability of textbooks and student-teacher ratio. In private schools student-teacher ratio is higher than in public schools. In addition, Lassibille, *et. al.*, (2000) assert that public schools are advantageous than their public school counterparts. Students in private schools are likely to achieve lesser academically than those public school students. They also highlighted that students in private schools achieve lower than those in public schools due to the following reasons: most private schools are still new and are facing start up challenges and are inconsistent as compared to the well-established public schools.

### 2.3.3 Zimbabwean literature on school choice

The educational system in Zimbabwe after independence in 1980 was advantageous to the white minority and the black majority had limited access to education especially in rural areas (Ngwenya & Pretorius, 2013). Most of the black schools were poorly funded and under-resourced with most of them utilising a separate curriculum offered from historically white schools. Before independence the Zimbabwean education system was divided into two with black education offered by the missionaries in form of mission school whereas the government offered the white community quality education spending twenty times more on it than on the black education schools in terms of resources and textbook provision (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2001).

The Zimbabwean government adopted the policy of making education a basic human right in an aim of trying to redress the inequality and segregation practices of the former colonial government (Ngwenya & Pretorius, 2013). Marketising the educational system includes introducing private entrepreneurs to provide education in a country with minimal government intervention and control. This increases school choice and equal opportunity to all students to attain high quality education which also fosters efficiency, creativity, innovation and a raised standard of the education system. School choice can also enhance segregation especially of the advantaged and the disadvantaged (Musset, 2012). Recent schooling debates on educational markets have improved both the role and efficiency of privatised distribution of scarce school resources and the access and quality of school choice to various groups in society. School markets are stratified by socio-economic status of clientele as well as school quality measures. Further, the existence of private schools (alongside public schools) provides schooling options only for those currently attending more elite mission schools. When *de facto* choices exist for only the elite of Zimbabwe, the effect of schooling choice is a reification of existing social structures (Ilon, 1992).

The thrust for privatisation has come largely from the World Bank (the Bank). It has largely been two pronged. First, existing government schooling systems were encouraged to add or increase “user fees” and other fees. This concept became known as “cost recovery.” Second, governments were encouraged to promote private schooling initiatives. In 1984, a working paper from the World Bank set out a theoretical basis for such a move by claiming that increasing user fees

would “make [schooling] more accessible to the poor . . . [and] have a long-term beneficial effect on income distribution” (Ilon, 1992, p.303). Katz, writing in a Bank-sponsored book on taxes in developing countries carried the privatisation argument one step further. Katz argues that all consumers benefitted from privatised markets even when there was no expansion of service quantity or quality. He claimed that the introduction of schooling “choices” at varying price levels would present households: the chance to choose the schools for their children education considering the fees charge and quality of education offered at the school (Ilon, 1992). In addition, Ilon (1992), points out that Zimbabwe is a country where a variety of schooling options exist; “choice” actually exists or, alternatively, if choice is a privilege of the wealthier families. In Zimbabwe the parents have the option of sending their children to private schools, public school and mission schools which all charge various fees depending on their difference in education quality.

Zimbabwe as a country introduced private sector education as a way of increasing choice to parents with students enrolled in poor and under-resourced historically black schools. It was also a way of desegregating the all-white schools by allowing advantaged blacks to enrol in such private schools. In the late 1980s more than 80% of the providers of secondary education were in the private sector. In Zimbabwe the private schools constitute some of the best and worst school while most of the government schools are seen in the middle of the spectrum (Ilon, 1992). Some of the schools are in the private sector but they are communally owned and the educators are paid their salary by the government. The educator’s quality is affected by the working conditions of the schools, location of the school and also the quality of the students in academic performance. All the teachers are paid a standardised salary by the government regardless of the school they operate from this guarantees an expected quality of service from all the teachers in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government should also introduce the voucher system to support students coming disadvantaged background to enhance their choice of schools between public and private schools (Ilon, 1992).

In addition, Ilon (1992) highlights that a multi-layered education system exists in Zimbabwe. The best schools are the private independent schools that are free from government regulation and control and they charge the highest fees. These schools were predominately all-white school only but have been recently been admitting the black affluent students since white enrolment has



been dwindling and racial discriminating barriers to enrol black students have been removed. Providing decent quality education to the majority students are mission school in both day and boarding schooling which are “middle fee-paying” and are affordable to most working class parents. Most of the mission schools are well financed and supported by the various founding churches and have high standards for admission in terms of minimum academic attainment and interviews which translate into high academic achievement in both Cambridge examinations and ZIMSEC public examinations. These mission schools represent more than 10% of all secondary schools in Zimbabwe and nearly 20% of all private schools. These schools are a source of high quality education to most Zimbabwe because of their affordability and academic excellence. In desegregating the education system the Zimbabwean government merged the two educational systems prior to independence into one classifying the former white schools as group “A” and the historically black schools as the “B” group to be managed and funded by the democratic government. Efforts by the government to equalise the distribution of the educational resource between the two has not been met since the group “A” schools are still dominated by the whites with the best resources as compared to the group “B” schools which have failed to attract white learners and has remained dominated by black learners with poor infrastructure and little resources to support education. The mission and community schools employ qualified educators; receive funds and resources from the government and good infrastructure. The government operates nearly 20% of all secondary schools in Zimbabwe (Ilon, 1992).

Most rural communities do not have proper schools because they were left out during the planning of the colonial education system by the White regime. School infrastructure of most of them is in a dilapidated state and the government has left the responsibility to the community to maintain the buildings. The people who make these communities are poor leading to further declining of the rural school and working conditions for teachers, although they are paid their salary by the government. The schools have poor infrastructure, under-qualified educators and low parental involvement all which hinders a positive culture of teaching and learning leading to poor academic achievement as compared to other public schools especially in towns. Rural schools make up 70% of the secondary schools in the country (Ilon, 1992).

Such parents undoubtedly do not feel they face a “menu of options” of school choice. Actual choice of schools is not made by weighing the costs and rewards of additional school

“investment” with additional schooling “returns.” As this study shows, schooling options do not, in fact, exist for these parents (Ilon, 1992). For many parents of community school attenders, the only realistic school option is the local community school – poor as the quality may be. Mission and government schools have very high admission standards. Admission is contingent upon passing a competitive exam. With inferior primary schooling and home conditions not conducive to high academic achievement, it is the exceptional rural, poor child who can even qualify for admission to these higher quality choices. Even when a child is admitted, many subsistence farmers will find the burden of higher school fees and the costs of transporting the child to be beyond their means. As what has been discussed, many parents are so hard-pressed to pay existing school fees, that innovative schemes have been devised to pool resources and fund school fees. Parents whose livelihood derives primarily from the informal sector may find it impossible to meet even modestly higher school fees (Ilon, 1992).

In addition, Ilon (1992) notes that for those with no accumulated wealth and little income, school choice is a luxury they cannot afford. Indeed, even the local rural school that charges minimal fees may be too expensive. While many a parent may wish to invest in “the best education they can afford,” it is only for the wealthy that can afford the best schools. Although the schooling options in Zimbabwe cannot be said to be a truly “private” market in that the government finances base teacher salaries, school quality and fees are differentiated and appear to offer a range of choices from which parents may choose. It has been found, however, that little choice, in fact, exists. Furthermore, Ilon (1992) identifies the percent of students’ enrolled rural schools (community schools) in Zimbabwe having slight chances of transferring out of these schools. Their options are simply whether or not to attend the local school, poor in quality though it may be. Children who attend mission schools have options, and their parents exercise this option by choosing a high- quality school. Poorer parents do not face a “menu of options” and have little choice but to send their children to the local, poorer quality, community or government school. Little doubt, they would choose the higher quality private school if it were a bona fide option. Over the last couple of decades society, including the society of Zimbabwe, has placed more and more emphasis on the academic achievement of its citizens. However, there is growing concern about the lower levels of academic achievement of secondary school learners, shown by their poor performance in public examinations in Zimbabwe (Gordon, 1995). In the Ordinary level (O level) examinations taken after four years of secondary education in 2002 and 2003, for example

only 13.8 and 12.8 percent of the learners who sat for the examinations passed five or more subjects necessary to gain a full O Level Certificate respectively (ZIMSEC, 2004a). Consequently, fewer learners qualified to proceed to Advanced level (A level), that is, six years of secondary education and to tertiary institutions (Gordon, 1995).

In order to improve their children's pass rates, some parents in Zimbabwe have resorted to sending their children to higher-achieving schools, most of which are expensive, with some charging as much as US\$600 to US\$1 000 per term (Gordon, 1995). Though the fees continue to rise in most of these schools, the scramble for places in high-achieving schools continues, in the hope that children will achieve above-average examination results. The parents are concerned about the high failure rates: that they would rather sacrifice the few dollars they make to enrol their children to boarding schools which have better facilities, discipline and low staff turnover as they are assured of a pass unlike in day schools. The sentiments expressed above underline the importance parents attach to high academic achievement. In Zimbabwe, the percentage of prosperous O level students passing in five or more subjects has declined notably from above 60% in 1980 to less than 15% in 2000 compared with previous year (Nyagura, 1991, p.209; ZIMSEC, 2002b).

**Table 2:** National O level pass rates in Zimbabwe 1998 to 2001

Year	No. of candidates	No. of candidates passing 5+ subjects	% Pass
1998	244 083	35 593	14.58
1999	242 329	38 036	15. 69
2000	264 056	36 659	13.88
2001	272 125	38 077	13.99

Source: ZIMSEC, 2002a.

The table above shows very low pass rates for Zimbabwe between 1998 and 2001. An examination of some individual school results shows that some schools, especially from the District Rural Council (schools run by local authorities in the rural areas), urban and rural day-government secondary schools are registering very low pass rates (0%-10%) as well. On the

other hand, non-government day and boarding schools register pass rates as high as 98% (ZIMSEC, 2004a).

In their analysis of the 1998-2003 O level results, the ZIMSEC (2004a) has attributed high pass rates in non-government schools to the availability of qualified and experienced educators as well as an adequate resource base for teaching and learning. On the other hand, inadequate human and material resources have explained low pass rates. The low pass rates at both the national and school levels provide adequate evidence that there exist a problem of school decline and academic achievement in Zimbabwe.

## **2.4 Managing decline**

There is ample evidence that highlight that schools as organisations are complex to lead and manage. Managing people in teams, various stakeholders, conflicting goals and unclear vision and mission statement are some of the characteristics that contribute to the difficulties in managing schools as organisations (Cyert, 1978). Moreover, management of educational institutions becomes much more complex and amplified under conditions of institutional decline (Whetten, 1980). Educational leaders are encouraged to utilise some of the tried and tested strategies of managing decline in organisations from the business sector (Kotler & Murphy, 1981). The strategies includes the leaders familiarising themselves with the external environmental factors that can affect the school as an organisation and how to manage internal affairs and maintaining a shared vision and mission.

An unpublished study conducted by Mthiyane, *et. al.* (date unknown), found that restoring of once successful schools that have declined, to their former glory and pride is a difficult process. The researchers state that there are no easy answers or short-term solutions to restore these schools to their glory. They believe that to arrest the phenomenon of school decline requires a multi-prolonged approach, with the buy-in of all stakeholders, committed for the long haul. In addition, Mthiyane, *et. al.* (date unknown), cite the following possible solutions for school decline, a continuous development programmes for both school leaders and teachers, running of schools as businesses, democratic leadership, teamwork, empowerment of principals with teacher unions and balance between pupils' rights and responsibilities. Also noted was the proper

implementation of education department policies, effective support from Education Department officials, improved parental involvement and restoration of the culture of teaching and learning.

#### **2.4.1 Turning around decline**

People usually recognise decline when it will be too late to stop it or turn it around (Kanter, 2004). The signs of decline become too visible and noticeable such that some members within the organisation can start discussing about them or people from outside can point the decline out (Kanter, 2004). According to Hochbein and Duke (2011), educational leaders needs to familiarise themselves of the phenomenon of decline and what constitute decline so that they can be able to identify it before it becomes spiral in their school, consequently leading to closure as the last option if they do not respond fast enough.

According to Kanter (2004), turnarounds are tough and are swinging times when things can go either way, depending on whether there is the right kind of committed leadership. Leadership is very important in turning around declining organisations because a good leader will restore the eroded confidence of employees and motivate them to become winners again (Kanter, 2004). In addition, Kanter (2004) notes that turnarounds are not for the impatient or the faint hearted. Strong leadership plus improved financial and human resources are necessary for turning around and reversing the downward decline trend and bring positive confidence which is important for success (*ibid*, 2004).

The following are several tough realities common to all turnarounds: instilling confidence in people that change is important for the organisation's success after a lot of failed change; managing other leaders whom you would have replaced in their position if you were hired to save an organisation; attaining permanent positive change, securing success from failure, and finally motivating people to willingly and enthusiastically work as a team to achieve the organisational goals (Kanter, 2004). In turning around declining organisations leaders should shift the cycle away from the sins of losers and restore accountability, collaboration and initiatives since these are the three cornerstones of confidence which is essential in turning around organisations (Kanter, 2004).

## 2.5 Sustaining success

Long-term capacity to sustain school success and achieving organisational goals take a period of time, hard work, dedication and determination from all members of an organisation. Sustainability articulates the following by an organisation to survive in the ever-changing hostile environment: innovation, creativity, progression, collaborative tendencies and sharing of decision making over time (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006).

The following are desired educational leadership qualities: school vision and mission, academic staff development and transforming the organisation (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005), increased accountability to interested stakeholders at all levels, creating an accommodating safe and conducive environment for both students and staff (Jacobson, Johnson, Giles, & Ylimaki, 2005b). A shared mission and vision is important to have efforts directed in achievement of the laid down objective of effective teaching and learning in schools. Encouraging accountability in schools and staff development are also key to the achievement of effective teaching and learning. Creation of support structures for both students and staff, recognising hard workers and creating a positive professional and school growth can sustain success over time. Organisations should be flexible to adapt to both internal and external change. Other organisations seem are inflexible, rigid, and incapable to meet the changing needs; some are designed in a flexible way of quickly adapting to change and innovations (Ulrich, 1997).

Dissatisfaction of achieved outcomes of “managed change” (Louis, 1994), has resulted to new concern in “the development of local capacity in successful school improvement efforts” (Leithwood, Leonard & Sharratt 1998, p.243). In this study, “capacity building” in schools is seen as “creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning” (Harris, 2002, p.3). Organisations are made up different individuals it is to the best interest of the manager to make sure that the relationships that exist among members of the organisation are of collaborative tendencies, team work and shared commitment. The organisation should be progressive based on shared leadership and decision making, relationship built on trust and confidence, increased accountability at all levels, encouraged staff development and mutual support and consensus (Jacobson, *et. al.*, 2005b). A flexible adaptive organisation including support from internal and external factors enables organisations to sustain success

(Marks & Printy, 2003; Stoll, 1999) these help organisations to self-renew themselves in time (Bryk, Camburn & Louis, 1999; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001).

Leithwood and Riehl (2005) note that the following are important, but not enough to achieve success in any situation: having a vision and creating common goals through a shared vision and mission; encouraging collaborative tendencies and team work through sharing ideas and staff development and transforming the organisation to suit its aims. Schools progress through: accounting actions by members at all levels, taking advantage of external factors of change and setting high academic standards for both teachers and learners; creating strong interpersonal environment at work, respecting students and making schools as safe as possible, a positive school-community relationship and the sharing of the school vision of high academic achievement by all interested stakeholders.

Schools should priorities including its various stakeholders in managing their schools especially parents. Parents can be involved in various ways including inviting them for parent-school meetings, consultation days where they come to get feedback on the academic progress of their children, fund raising activities to raise money to be used by the school on specifies activities and also on ‘Mothers and Father Day’ and volunteering programmes to benefit the school. Parental involvement increases their ownership of the school and safer school which result in school sustained success over time (Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson & Ylimaki, 2007).

## **2.6 Help disadvantaged schools and students improve**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED, 2012), asset that declining schools with a lot of poor performing pupils are at a greater disadvantage of continuous decline in their overall academic achievement. Poor academic attaining schools usually do not have enough ability and resources to improve their infrastructures and advance their staff academically and their surrounding environment fails to provide the best conducive academic environment for its students to perform better.

According to the OCED (2012), the following are some of the recommended strategies to guide poor academic achieving schools to improve:

### **2.6.1 Improve leadership qualities and style**

One of the most essential characteristic of successful schools is the good and visionary leadership. School leaders should be carefully selected based on qualifications and experience, be given autonomy to managed the schools through accountability and succession plans should also be available in school. School leaders should be offered support by the government through staff development programmes, monitoring and networks of sharing challenges and solutions (OCED, 2012).

### **2.6.2 Creating a conducive school culture of teaching and learning**

According to the OCED (2012), the starting point of sustaining poor academic achieving or declining schools is the restoration of a positive culture of learning and teaching which will improve the academic pass rates. The schools need to promote an effective teacher-student relationship where teachers are accountable of the identification, monitoring and assisting and counselling struggling pupils to help them improve academically. The schools can also increase their term year and offer extra support to such students especially before the final public examinations so that they will be better prepared to meet the minimal standard pass rates.

### **2.6.3 Recruiting and retaining high quality educators and students**

Another setback noticed is that poor academic achieving schools do not usually employ the best educators for the job they are prepared to settle for less. The schools should: employ the best qualified personnel for the job; should offer assistance and monitoring to novice teachers; reduce the staff turnover especially of the best and most experienced by offering incentives both financial and career wise and encourage teamwork and collaboration of departments to offer staff support programmes leading to high staff morale and retention (OCED, 2012).

### **2.6.4 Implementing the best teaching and learning pedagogy in the classroom**

There is evidence from research that pedagogical practices have an impact on the academic achievement of students. The teachers should research and share the best methods of teaching



certain components of the curriculum or subjects that will enhance the academic of slow learning students in such schools. Teachers need to be learner-centred than to be curriculum-based. They should not rush through to finish the curriculum when the learners do not understand it and should start a new curriculum concept after the current one that they were teaching has been understood by the majority of the students. Teachers should do continuous assessment to monitor the progress of their students and provide assistance to struggling students through extra lessons or peer assistance by high performing students to the weak ones to ensure that all students pass (*ibid*, 2012).

### **2.6.5 Building a positive parent-school relationship**

OCED (2012) highlights that socially and economically disadvantaged parents are less involved and informed of the academic progress of their children. Parents can be involved in various ways including inviting them for parent-school meetings, consultation days where they come to get feedback on the academic progress of their children, fund raising activities to raise money to be used by the school on specifies activities and also on ‘Mothers and Father Day’ and volunteering programmes to benefit the school. Schools should priorities involving parents in their children’s academic life because this result in improved pupils academic progress and pass rates.

### **2.7 Chapter summary**

The chapter reviewed the relevant literature on school decline and school choice internationally, continentally and nationally. Also literature was reviewed on managing decline, turning around decline, sustaining decline and helping disadvantaged schools and students improve. The next chapter (Chapter 3) outlines the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a detailed literature review that guides the study on school decline, school choice, managing decline, sustaining success and helping low-performing schools and students improve. This chapter highlights the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Kanter (2004)'s organisational decline. Also included are various tables on Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline to help the theoretical framework to be understood better. These theoretical frameworks were later used in Chapter Five when they brought meaning to the research findings and also in Chapter Six when they presented the conclusions and recommendations. A summary concludes the chapter including all the aspects of the two theoretical frameworks that have been mentioned throughout this chapter.

#### 3.2 Organisational decline

Masuch (1985) regards organisational decline as the "last stage of the organisation's life cycle before collapse" (Masuch, cited in Duke, 2008, p.46). According to Duke (2008), decline is set in motion by many things and these include decreased academic attainments, conflict between departments of an organisation and incompetent leadership and management. Whetten (1987) notes that it is evident that decline is caused by internal (factors within the organisation) and external (factors outside the organisation). Internal factors leading to decline in organisations comprise of management and leadership, organisational set up and quality of the staff; while external organisational factors are the environment in which the organisation is situated, availability of qualified staff and customer goodwill. An organisation's inflexibility to change is interconnected to many pointers, which constitute the definition of decline (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989).

Organisational failure has not been given enough attention it deserves as a phenomenon of study because researchers were more interested in how organisations grow and improve (Duke & Hochbein, 2008). Researchers focus more on growth because people are more interested in progression and advancement than on failure and decline since the society is always growing

positively and advancing in all spheres of life. The management of organisational decline has been stimulated by the retrenchment era and the recent shut down and collapse of prominent organisations around the globe (Whetten, 1980). It is also noted that organisational failure, has been given little attention and research although it is an unavoidable component of an organisation's life. Also there is a lack of knowledge on the causes and what constitute decline and how to respond and curb decline in organisations (Whetten, 1980). The organisational sciences literature views organisational decline as a process that is multifaceted and complex (Murphy & Meyers, 2008).

### **3.3 Theoretical frameworks**

Evidence put together to give a guide line and parameters for particular views, explanations and understanding of any phenomenon is known as a theoretical framework (Lassa & Enoh, 2000). A theoretical framework provides the radar that constantly guides research activity from conception to conclusion. Broadly, the theoretical framework delimits the scope of the research, providing a basis for explanation of generated information or emerging meanings and themes; places items in a logical manner and predicting conclusions (Lassa & Enoh, 2000).

A theoretical framework truly delimits the given research. It is a graphic way of saying that what is to be done is defined by the boundaries of the theories that make up the framework and outside this, the researcher cannot be held accountable (Lassa & Enoh, 2000). Caliendo and Kyle (1996, p.225) posit that “a theoretical framework informs the reader of the underpinnings and assumptions implicit in the work”. Lassa and Enoh (2000) note that the relevance of research findings, though not dependent on previous research, is seen more when such findings are linked to the existing fund of knowledge. What facilitates such linkages is a theoretical framework, essentially because a properly articulated theoretical framework provides the foundation upon which an entire research is based. Theoretical frameworks present a vivid picture of the real thing and without them having a prior total picture, indispensable for planning is almost impossible. Caliendo and Kyle (1996, p.227) state, “it enables us to see how the model research design, operationalisation of concepts and data analysis flow logically and soundly from the theory”. Theoretical frameworks once developed, they assist the researcher to systematise his activities, predict his findings and explain them too. The importance of theoretical frameworks in educational research is beyond question. Not only do they serve as blueprints for all that is to

follow, they also enable the researcher to assess the consistency of the methods and in interpreting and discussing the conclusions (Lassa & Enoh, 2000).

### 3.3.1 Weitzel and Jonsson (1989): Five stage model of organisational decline

Predicting decline with accuracy at every stage is difficult but decline should be noticed in its early stage by management and corrective measures should be implemented immediately before the decline becomes spiral and irreversible in organisations. Weitzel and Jonsson (1989) reviewed the literature on organisational decline and came up with a model of organisational decline that predicts decline to under-go five stages. The model highlights that decline manifest in stages which are five. Stage one is when organisations cannot the notice the beginning of the decline process. Stage two is when organisations notice decline in their organisations but are inflexible to adapt to the internal and external factors causing decline. Stage three is when organisations misdirect their funds and efforts in trying to curb decline. Stage four is when organisations are in a spiral of decline and the decline is almost irreversible and too costly. Stage five is when organisations are forced to dissolve (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989).

**Table 3:** The five stages of decline and consequent organisational responds

<b>The five stages of Organisational Decline and Consequent Organisational responds</b>	
<b>Stages</b>	<b>Organisational responds</b>
<b>1. Blinded</b>	Unable to notice the early manifestation of decline in the organisation.
<b>2. Inaction</b>	Decline becomes visible but the organisation is rigid to take action.
<b>3. Faulty Action</b>	Inappropriate decisions made; misdirected efforts and resources.
<b>4. Crisis</b>	The final chance to save the organisation through turn around or further declining of the organisation to the last stage.
<b>5. Dissolution</b>	The organisation is forced to liquate or close although a slim chance of slow turn around the organisation exist but it is a costly process.
Decline can be reversed at each stage except the last stage where it becomes complex due to lack or financial resources since it will be cheaper to close than to turn around the organisation.	

Adapted from Weitzel and Jonsson (1989, p.97).

It is acknowledged that it is very difficult to determine the stage of decline at any point in time with certainty in schools. The model is helpful as a basis for *post facto* analysis for decline in organisation.

The model highlights that challenges and difficulties of external and internal changes will require more drastic and expensive measures as the stages of decline consecutively progress in an organisation. At every stage the model predicts the expected challenges that management should resolve before the complexity of the challenges increase as the decline progress in stages. The table below shows the model of decline of a company called Healthy Start.

**Table 4:** Combined model of organisational decline: Healthy Start

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Intra Organisational Factors</b>	<b>Organisation-Environment Relations</b>
1. Blinded	Over commitment of leaders  Drop in members	New government policies  Increase in working mothers
2. Inaction	Exhaustion of Committee  Resistance to change  Long serving volunteers  Staff turnover, Decrease in members, Less demand for services	Increase in competition from government, nonprofit and for-profit services  Increase in government regulation
3. Faulty Action	Fundraising in decline, Conflict at all levels, Change in aims  Emphasis on professionals  Lack of consensus	Increased government resources direct to mothers Changing societal values about motherhood. Need for more modern name

4. Crisis	Membership declining further Staff and volunteer turnover increasing Time commitment of volunteers decreasing	All trends identified still continuing Healthy Start has little social and political influence.
5. Dissolution	Technically bankrupt	No longer seen as relevant to modern mothers

Based on: Oliver (1992) and (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1991).

From the above table as a researcher contributing to new knowledge, I have decided to formulate my own table based on schools as organisations using the five stages of organisational decline.

**Table 5:** Combined model of organisational decline for schools as organisations

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Intra School Factors</b>	<b>School-Environment Relations</b>
1. Blinded	Over commitment of principals and school management team members Decline in academic and sporting achievements Poor or incompetent school leadership and management Decrease in learner enrolment	New government policies on education (school choice) Increase in the need for private schools and colleges
2. Inaction	Exhaustion of school governing bodies	Increase in competition from government, mission and

	<p>Poor academic and sporting achievements</p> <p>Resistance to change (technological, leadership and management styles)</p> <p>Long serving staff</p> <p>Staff turnover, Decrease in learner enrolment</p> <p>Less demand for public school education</p>	<p>private schools</p> <p>Increase in government regulation</p>
3. Faulty Action	<p>Fundraising and external donor funds in decline</p> <p>Conflict at all levels</p> <p>Change in aims and mission</p> <p>Emphasis on professionals</p> <p>Lack of consensus on staff</p>	<p>Increased support of private education from parents and political parties</p> <p>Increased government resources to private education</p> <p>Changing societal values about education</p> <p>Need for more modern teaching and learning (technology computers and internet)</p>
4. Crisis	<p>Learner enrolment declining further.</p> <p>Staff and school governing body members turnover</p>	<p>All trends identified still continuing.</p> <p>Public education now has little social and political</p>

	<p>increasing</p> <p>Time commitment of parents</p> <p>decreasing</p>	influence
5. Dissolution	Enrolment too low such that the school is closed down	Public education no longer seen as relevant to modern children. Public education seen as inferior to private education.

### 3.3.1.1 Stage one: Blinded

Organisations in the first stage of decline are unable to recognise environmental factors both external and internal that have changed that can affect their long-term existence. Lorange and Nelson (1987) propose internal characteristics that highlight problems leading to organisational decline if they remain unresolved. Characteristics can be over staffing, compromising recruitment standards, red tape, unclear organisational structures, unclear goals, vision and decision by management, scapegoating, ineffective communication channels and unsupportive organisational hierarchy. These factors have to be identified as what constitute the decline continuum before corrective actions can be implemented. All organisation face challenges on identifying their own weaknesses or short fallings, but effective organisations are highly proactive and prepared to continuously self-evaluate their current standing in the environment (Hedberg, Nystrom & Starbuck, 1976).

Stage one of organisational decline is characterised by inadequate ways of internal examination. Organisations have ineffective routine checkups of operational standards processes and periodic evaluation of staff attitudes and satisfaction which constitute the problems of decline. Often there are few training, skills-advancement, or hiring programmes to ensure a well-trained and qualified work force (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). It is noted that employee commitment is an important factor in successful retrenchment and the reversal of decline. Employees are aware of this and internalise, the corporate mission, goals and strategies, can also identify challenges to the



expected results and will alter their behaviour in the direction to meet these requirements. After acknowledging the challenges associated with failure in stage one, organisations enter stage two.

### **3.3.1.2 Stage two: Inaction**

The second stage of decline is characterised by no action, in spite of indications of decline in academic pass rates. Corporate business organisations could show signs like reduced returns, decreasing trades, and excess stocks (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In schools, these signs can include the decline in academic pass rates, deteriorating of school buildings and properties, poor discipline in both staff and students (high absenteeism and poor conduct) and poor and incompetent school leadership and management. The school may experience a decrease in student enrolment and increased staff turnover. Schools may see an erosion of student and parent confidence. This stage is expected to be noticeable and to take much more time especially in larger organisations that starts to decline (Cameron & Zammuto, 1983). Decline becomes noticeable to organisational members although it is not yet spiral but will be moving towards those directions if the organisational problems remain unresolved. In a school scenario both the school management members, staff and parents would have observed that the academic pass rates of the school are slowly declining yearly and the school buildings and properties are deterioration and are in need of immediate attention.

Organisations and schools might take time taking corrective action because of the following reasons. Organisations usually adopt a “wait and see” policy because they might think or misgauge the external or internal threats as temporary or not there to stay. Another reason is change is expensive, disturbing and complex (Miller & Friesen, 1980). School leaders should develop skills of understanding and determining whether decline in academic pass rates is caused by temporary external factors like the difficult of the public examinations that year or it was caused by the unpreparedness of both the staff and students which can be rectified (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Taking no action to some problems is not a solution the management should decide whether the problem is temporary or long-term and appropriate solutions should be implemented. Schools respond to deteriorating academic achievement pass rates in various ways, including rejection, dodging, conflict, or postponement and unwilling to accept change (Levy, 1986).

Most school leaders tend to over commit themselves to their current problems resulting in inaction on new problems. They usually busk in past glory failing to recognise new emerging problems, especially the founding school leaders (Starbuck, Greve & Hedberg, 1978). Such leaders are highly likely to maintain the status quo due to their conservative nature even though a need to change is of high importance. School management mostly lack knowledge on how to adapt and incorporate change in their organisations (Thompson, 1967). School managers in failing schools are exposed to increased stress and “failure paranoia,” as their confidence and ability is at risk of being challenged by other organisational members (Starbuck, *et. al.*, 1978; Whetten, 1980b; Cameron & Zammuto, 1983).

As pressure mounts on school managers in declining schools, they tend to be more susceptible autocratic and narrows their vision. They fail to be democratic and do not consult other staff members in decision making (Whetten, 1980b; Greenhaigh, 1983). The observation of decline by some members in schools tend to reduce their commitment to quality teaching and learning which further reduces the academic performance of the school (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Stage three come up when the organisations take inaction to the current problems from stages one and two.

### **3.3.1.3 Stage three: Faulty Action**

Stage three is characterised by more problems than success and success becomes over shadowed by problems like reduced performance and commitment by members of the organisation, lack of funds and resources and increased budget cut offs (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). As the time progresses the organisations find it more difficult to rectify both external and internal factors which leads to a further decline and making change much more complex, expensive and unattainable (Kaufman, 1985)

Organisational decline is slow but increases its downward trend if problems are not rectified and if incorrect actions are also implemented. Organisational problems are worsened by conflict and clicks emerging amongst the staff members and the various school departments fighting for the scarce school resources (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In schools members of staff start forming clicks and various departments start fighting for the declining school resources. Staff commitment is reduced due to grape vine and others start opting for other opportunities out of

the current school (Greenhaigh, 1982). The young and innovative staff will leave as they notice that professional growth and advancement is slowly disappearing in the school. In some schools, staff turnover of senior and more experienced and qualified personnel will increase as they look for better schools within or outside the country. School leaders are challenged and pressure mounts as the school further fails to deliver results (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In schools potential leaders start fighting for the senior positions and the principal's seat. Faulty decisions are made by most school leaders because they tend to be autocratic and make less informed decisions due to lack of consultation these are poorly implemented because the staff do not feel they own the decisions since they were never contribute to them (Whetten, 1980b), temporary solutions (Cyert & March, 1963), and solutions in areas in areas that are of least importance (Greenhaigh, 1983).

Ironically, stage three on the organisational decline model is be the best time to implement turn around measures and a main re-orientation. Managers should weight their options to save the organisation and assess the available options. School leaders and managers should manage conflict and motivate and restore confidence in their staff by emphasising the need to save the organisation and revive and restore it to its past glory. School managers should win the support of the staff through sharing decisions to be made at this stage such that effort is directed in one direction which is saving and turning the organisation from decline. The process serves as a promoter of an institute second-order or "frame breaking" change (Tushman, Newman, & Romanelli, 1986; Levy, 1986), resulting in major re-orientations of goods, facilities or innovations (Murray & Jick, 1985).

The following are remedies for turning around failure: hiring and recruiting new management, increasing variety by introducing new subjects and removing obsolete subjects from the syllabus and encouraging staff development and support (Schendel, Patton & Riggs, 1976). Successful implementation is the key to turning around organisations in decline and as always turn around is a difficult process requiring adequate time, competent and willing human resources and resources to back up the re-orientation plan. In schools new and competent leadership can be introduced, introducing new subjects, removing subjects that are not being done well may be due to enough resources and equipment and looking for expert teachers in problem subjects.

The autocratic style of leadership implemented by managers in need of quick decisions and results often meets a lot of resistance from the staff because they will be less committed to implement the decisions made for them on their behalf due to a lack of their input and ownership in them (Smart, Thompson & Vertinsky, 1978). In schools, during the third stage, decisions made should be well implemented and the staff should be included in making them through participatory and distributive leadership style so that they own and speed the process. Failure to turn around organisations in this stage is increased by poor communication channels which do not avail important information the rightful people and on time (Smart & Vertinsky, 1977) if staff members are not included in decision making. For success to be achieved they should be an open effective communication channel that encourages the sharing of valuable information at all levels. It should be noted that poor and inflexible planning is a recipe for failure. If school engagements to decline are not sufficient and meaningful the decline progresses into a more difficult and challenging next stage.

#### **3.3.3.4 Stage four: Crisis**

This stage is on reached after the organisation has been unsuccessfully to deal with decline, consequential to “crisis, chaos, procrastination, efforts to go ‘back to basics’, change and anger” (Levy, 1986, p.13). Some organisation can skip some stages into stage four without necessarily passing through some of the earlier stages and prediction and prevention of the fourth-stage crises are easy for most organisations. This is because in this stage the organisation has to choose its fate of life or death and saving the organisation includes re-orientation and revitalisation. In the school context this is the stage when the school has lost parental and students’ preference as a school of choice due to its low academic achievement.

Problems and difficulties within the organisation of decline are worsened by lack of resources and cutbacks on the budget which erodes staff confidence and commitment since success will now be difficult to achieve (Miller & Friesen, 1980), consequently declining the chances of the organisation to survive decline (Greenhaigh, 1983). Pupils, teachers, parents, and other interested parties begin to close or control their association with the organisation. The school has declined in learner enrolment such that some classes are no longer used, most of the senior staff has left only remaining with new and temporary staff, students remaining may not afford to enroll at better schools due to their academic achievement or financial matters and the school has lost

contact with parents and there is loss of school pride and self-esteem in students, staff and parents.

The only way to save the organisation is to restructure it and implement turn around strategies before it is too late. The “collapse of faith” arising from the erosion of confidence of the school’s stakeholders resulting from the successive failure will further weaken the organisation. Saving the organisation requires innovative alterations in organisation composition, approach, employees, and philosophy are important (Hedberg, *et. al.*, 1976). Advice from outside the organisation well-wishers is very important since they will be in a better position to identify the organisations weaknesses than the organisation members themselves. There is a need to carefully use the scarce financial and human resources since they limit the turn around process and to make the most out of them to achieve desired goals.

Bringing in new administrators in a declining organisation has the following advantages: changing the status quo, new and fresh ideas and removing biases and cliques in the organisation (Hedberg, *et. al.*, 1976; Levine, 1979; Tushman, *et. al.*, 1986). Hiring new management signifies the need for change and gives the organisation to start its recovering journey on a clean sheet without “scapegoating” tensions since new people makes people to easily forget the past and focus on the future. Rapid changes are important in this stage because of the limited time available plus replacing the top management overtime can hinder change because of the cohesiveness of the former management groups in the organisation which should be broken quickly to instill new and innovative ideas.

Tushman, *et. al.*, (1986) note that “frame-breaking” change (changing the leadership and management, increasing accountability, monitoring and evaluation procedure) can achieve turning around decline in organisations although it should be noted that no all revitalisations and restructuring will be successful. Inaction makes failure certain. The aims of turning around organisations should be long-term if organisations want to succeed in halting decline (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Implementations should focus on the whole organisation rather than on departmental efforts (Hirshhorn, 1983). Stressed under-achieving schools are much more willing to take risks (Singh, 1986), and are more willing to focus on short-term solutions than long-term ones.

The following can hinder effective school turnaround: a high staff turnover of the most qualified and experienced educators and changes in staff composition (Greenhaigh, 1983) the schools should offer incentives to retain and attract high quality teachers (Levine, 1979) and compensation of results and commitment. Maintaining a stable staff composition has the advantage of facing problems and challenges with people who can easily integrate and work in teams since they will be familiar with each other. Change is always faced with resistance which is worsened by managers and leaders keeping organisation secrets from the other staff, grape vine, or uncertainty. Union can save declining organisations from internal conflict of such issues like the dissatisfaction, working conditions and remuneration of employees through their negotiation and conflict management services (Greenhaigh, 1982, 1983).

Organisations should consider their external environmental factors like their competitors, targeting new or a niche group of students and offering creative and innovative curriculum (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Decline in school choice of a school will make it even much more difficult to enrol learners as it used to due to a lot of student migrating out of the school in search of better performing school elsewhere (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). These obstacles have to be overcome if organisations have to be successful in turning around organisations. In the school context parents are likely to demand more concern on how the school is managed and the production of results, parents will transfer their children to better academic achieving schools and the school might lose its learners up to a point of merging with another school for learners or face risk of closure.

### **3.3.1.5 Stage five: Dissolution**

This final stage is unalterable. Organisations are in decline due to resources exhaustion, loss of school choice and goodwill and high staff turnover of the most brilliant and skilled teachers (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Lack of resources and capital can increase the probability of new leadership and management increasing the failure rate (Miller & Friesen, 1980). As organisational members see that the organisation is about to be dissolved conflict increases (Mintzberg, 1984). Decline will continue until the school does not have a choice but to dissolve, merge with another school or to face closure.

In this last stage the school will be in serious capital depletion since its students have been declining each year, transferring out of learners and goodwill and staff turnover of quality teachers. It is the stage when a school might lose its learners up to a point of merging with another school for learners or face closure. Minimise losses and reducing stress and retention pressures is the key to “success” at this point of the organisation’s life. Organisational managers can encourage staff to look for employment in other organisations (Hirshhorn, 1983; Sutton, 1987). Success in this stage is a smooth organisational closure or dissolution and little has been researched on successful dissolution and closure of organisations (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). Organisations in this stage are destined to their dissolution and if managed effectively it can save the organisation some money because it is an expensive process.

### **3.3.2 Kanter’s organisational decline theory**

The next theoretical framework utilised was that of Kanter (2004). She (Kanter) outlines the importance of confidence in successful and losing teams highlighting its important role in both situations. Using a research of sports teams in United States of America, a cycle of confidence is established. Confidence is shown to reinforce a winning mentality in successful teams and losing teams are also in a cycle of decline because they lack confidence to win. Kanter (2004) acknowledges that this idea can also be borrowed and applied in schools and it also shows confidence playing a big role in the way successful and declining schools operate.

A framework for turning confidence around is presented: the first stone: facing facts and reinforcing responsibility; the second stone: cultivating collaboration and the third stone: inspiring initiative and innovation. Numerous sports and business examples are used to illustrate these ideas and Kanter concludes by exploring the role of leaders in building confidence and the personal life lessons for individuals.

Being successful implies that staff or clubs or organisations to exist for extensive time periods need upkeep and resuscitations – which is re-investment. Champions experience natural aging progressions as individuals grow old, depreciate, migrate. The infrastructure, implements and pool of ideas get outdated, depreciation and dilapidated. Champions also have a life-span – the organisational comparable “shelf-life” and “shelf-space” (Kanter, 2004, p.73). Other champion’s advantages which reach limits are capacity or product and market saturation. This in a school

context can be noted when once best schools undergo a natural aging process as their best and most experienced staff gets older, slow, leave, school facilities and buildings get older, deteriorates, run down and are not renovated and also when equipment gets obsolete and not replaced.

A winning streak requires renewal and rebuilding. In the schools fresh blood (newly qualified and innovative staff) is required to bring new ideas especially in the management phase so that the schools can reorient their school vision and mission to the current educational trends. As drive decline, employees and infrastructure decline. Less care and maintains of school physical infrastructure increases. It might show up in sloppy clothing, out-of-shape bodies, and dirty fingernails, peeling paint or broken windows. Decline can begin with eliminating just one part, overlooking just one regulation, ignoring just one component. For example: increasing time period to do renovations through postponements of action, reducing important session, being economic on the supplying of important elements and trying to save time by eliminating important meetings on the work schedule (Kanter, 2004).

Success comes with its own problems like the need to continuously win and maintaining and sustaining the winning streaks. Even without regulation reducing winners' advantages, winners often face circumstances in which their competition gets tougher. Being successful invites competition. Modernisers have the market to themselves until market followers (competitors) join in the provision of goods and service. Success forms attractive markets, boosts reproductions and attracts the hardest rivalries (Kanter, 2004). This is true, in schools it is very hard for schools to remain achieving high academic achievement due to various reasons like change of leadership and management, staff loss due to death, retirement or transfers to other schools, change of the curriculum and change in the quality of learners each year.

A positive emotional climate of high expectations reinforces self-confidence. Winners' behaviours and attitudes – including abundant communication, thorough preparation using detailed metrics, mutual respect and deep knowledge of one another's strengths, the desire to work together and help one another succeed and empowering environment of shared leadership – reinforce confidence in one another. Organisational culture and routines supporting accountability, collaboration and initiative reinforces confidence in the system. Strong networks providing encouragement, resources and information reinforce external confidence (Kanter,



2004). In schools which are high achieving in academics they exhibit winners' behaviours and attitudes including abundant communication, through preparations using detailed metrics, mutual respect and deep knowledge of one another's strengths, the desire to work together and help one another succeed and empowering environment of shared leadership – reinforce confidence in one another. All is done to ensure that the high academic achievement is maintained.

But champions lose competitive advantage when confidence turns into anxiety and overconfidence, when water walkers forget that there are stones holding them up beneath the water and let those under pinnings of confidence crumble. They underestimate their backing scheme, their self-controls, their responsibility and they over-estimate their performance. The rocks that help high performers succeed provide a buffer against adversity, a resilience that helps them bounce back from troubles. But losing streaks begin after backings reduce and players fall into the three traps of fear, carelessness and rejection (Kanter, 2004).

She (Kanter) notes that people pretend as if everything is okay when problem and difficulties are present in any situation. They can look for root causes (asking questions); dig deeply in their analysis to consider many factors; test numerous hypotheses about what went wrong and what lies ahead; scrutinise their own behaviour and modify it as necessary; find numerous possibilities for influence and remain focused on a well-thought-through course of action. The situation will get worse, however, if people seek overly simple solutions and refuse to question them; leap from one idea to another in *ad hoc* fashion and become easily distracted and when faced with a stubborn problem, give up or blame someone else. Fear causes champions to lose. According to Kanter (2004), panic is an unexpected, nervous feeling of loss of control and panicking can make mistakes worse, by triggering individuals to lose their confidence and forgetting to think plainly. Or sometimes threats stop people in their tracks, paralysing them or causing them to revert to the most familiar actions of the past. Poor decisions are usually made under pressure due to fear. Panic in schools is seen when the academic achievement suddenly drops the people start blaming each other, the school leadership moves from sharing decision making to tight control and top to down decision making and communication among members decrease (Kanter, 2004).

Rejection can be an act used by people to prevent others from seeing change or a means of preventing change. People have a stake in maintaining any theory of how the world works that gives them advantages in competing for resources, such as insisting that nothing has changed

that would decrease their own department's funding. So they try to manage how the situation is defined, making their own proposals look good by downplaying information that does not fit their theory and thus ignoring the true facts of the situation and hoping others will ignore them too (*ibid*, 2004). Denial in schools can be behaviours by staff not to admit that there is need for new leadership style that is shared to improve decision making, failure to admit there is a problem within their own department and failure to accept necessary advice from colleagues on how to handle educational matters.

According to Kanter (2004), sometimes the blinders are unintentional. Denial can be strengthened by a person's intellect. This is when a person chooses to focus on certain factors and rejecting the importance of the other factors – like boiling down the Ten Commandments to the four that are easiest to remember. When companies lag in terms of embracing new waves of technology, for example, denial can stem from a combination of entrenched interests that prefer to ignore change (to preserve position) and to oversimplify the world in order to have short reports on crowded agendas at management meetings. Thus, they miss subtle signs of change until change become major phenomena.

People can be in denial in three ways by seeing no trouble; hearing no trouble and speaking no trouble are the three monkeys of denial. In organisations some employees cannot even identify difficulties, do not even want to hear the organisational difficulties and most do not want to talk about the organisational problems may be because they have something to hide (Kanter, 2004). Champions who carry on reinforcing responsibility, teamwork and creativity can easily identify problems and examine where they are coming from, because they are prepared to take action due to their confidence. They respond to problems or pressures by carrying out organisational-examination and reflecting on their own dealings, while losers 'scapegoat' problem and drown in denial (*ibid*, 2004).

Kanter (2004) highlights that solving problems in organisations is made possible and easier by sharing the problems openly and sharing ideas on how to tackle the problems. In a turnaround, Huskies avoided denial and restored people's confidence. Like natural optimists, they assumed that problems were temporary and resolvable. They felt empowered to act and so they were more likely to examine their own performance and make adjustments. The communication, respect, responsibility, collaboration and initiative that surrounded them needed to be renewed and with

that renewal came the collective strength to meet any challenge (*ibid*, 2004). Avoiding panic, neglect and denial helps a team recover: not panicking gives people the composure to think and to talk. When they talk, they are more likely to identify areas needing improvement, thus avoiding neglect. Open communication makes it impossible to sink into denial.

Kanter (2004) notes that low-performing companies, teams, schools or hospitals do not want their dirty linen washed in public. Those eager to talk were overwhelmingly likely to be successful or headed for success. Later after a turnaround, leaders are comfortable with recounting and even exaggerating how dreadful it was under previous regimes. There are many retrospective accounts of decline and fall of this or that empire, many Enron-type postmortems dealing with what went wrong. But when a team first begins to accumulate losses, when a person starts feeling like a failure, when a company starts having problems, when panic and chaos reign, it is hard to get them to tell the world about it (Kanter, 2004).

In her theory, Kanter also notes that as problems mount, so does the likelihood that managers would retreat to their own turf and defend it against change. People tended to blame, avoid one another, become less communicative and managers retreat to their own territory instead of thinking about the school as a whole (Kanter, 2004). Commands start flowing from the top. Tighter cost controls are greeted with cynicism, as people whisper that none of it mattered if the company collapsed. Some began to do minimum, showing up at work only long enough to earn their end-of-year bonus; everyone assumed that others would be leaving, so they said it was not worth getting to know them.

Unchecked cycles of decline can easily turn into death spirals. According to Kanter (2004), privacy, scapegoating, segregation escaping, loss of confidence creates a belief that makes the scenario and change impossible and accelerates the death spiral. Failure of organisations do not stem single factors but from various factors that will not be halted by the organisation that would perpetuate problem and difficulties resulting in the downward trend of organisational decline (*ibid*, 2004). She notes that when the downward trend of decline starts it is very difficult to stop and turn it around into success because decline can perpetuate losing streaks and erode confidence which makes it seem impossible to reverse the decline process.

It is possible to slip into successions of failure unnoticed until everyone can visualise trends of decline and failure (Kanter, 2004). The downward trend will become too visible to be ignored and everything will deteriorate for example infrastructure and confidence. The leaders should choose to reverse the decline if it is possible or to dissolve the organisation as an option (Kanter, 2004). According to Hochbein and Duke (2011), knowledge on what is school decline, its causes and how to identify it can help educational managers to easily identify it in its early stages to save the organisation from further decline and dissolution.

A company called Static in decline identified by Kanter (2004) had the following: isolation and avoidance were both causes that led to a lack of mutual respect. Those who had opportunities were leaving, though to companies less prominent than Static, which further reinforced the loser mentality and the feeling that one should jump off the ship now before the “loser” label was applied (Kanter, 2004). These are the same factors identified in declining schools. Isolated staff members tend to work individually, no more team work and department planning and cooperation and more avoidance or no meetings at all leads to poor or lack of mutual respect amongst the staff members.

Depressed organisations have the tendency to shut off contact with the outside world, to ignore or neglect customers or suppliers while they meet purely internal goals (Kanter, 2004). When its period of decline started in the 1990s, the BBC had lost its audience. Low-performing public schools were out of touch with parents and the community (Kanter, 2004). The same with low academic achieving schools they have less parental involvement in terms of parent days, fund raising, school development committees and decision making.

Kanter (2004) notes that in declining organisations conflict among staff, factions or divisions create classes in organisation. She notes that unfair distribution of power, decisions and resources can perpetuate organisational decline. Certainly in troubled organisations, managers tend to become choosy, favouring cliques or campaigns for reasons other than neutral performance (*ibid*, 2004). The erosion of confidence in declining organisation will result to members compromising on standards and quality with most staff settling for sub-standard performance (Kanter, 2004).

Stress is a source of panic. Terror results in losing. Losing raise the levels of carelessness – deterioration of infrastructure, decline in conduct, and reduced responsibility. Symbols of decline increases secrecy, reduces trust and dependability amongst members and irresponsibility – a source of denial. Elements mentioned above erode the cornerstone of confidence. People lose their self-esteem, confidence in both the organisation and their peers. Expectations are reduced to minimal and people become conservative and resistant to change and innovations (*ibid*, 2004).

As people sense failure in organisations their confidence is eroded resulting in losing streak. As people feel hopelessness due to loss of confidence so as their self-esteem which will perpetuate losing tendencies. People tend to be self-protective behaviours and scapegoating when the organisation is in decline and when they have to share scarce resources. As a result of decline the following characteristics are exhibited: decreased communication; increased scapegoating; reduced accountability; clique formation; misdirected vision and focus; conflicts among departments; creativity and innovations reduced; expectations are reduced and increased grape vine (Kanter, 2004, p.98).

The above characteristics are the opposite of what makes up the confidence of winning teams which makes it difficult to win for losing teams who exhibit such characteristics. These losers' temptations feed on themselves, each tendency reinforcing the others. Powerlessness corrodes the cornerstone of confidence, reducing accountability, collaboration and initiative. At the extreme it can corrupt, if losers' habits lead to acts of petty tyranny, selfishness and a desire to harm others. Understanding each of the losers' temptations makes clear how to recognise the symptoms of decline and why it is so important to avoid them. If untreated, these responses can turn a few losses into a long losing streak and modest decline into a death spiral (Kanter, 2004).

### **3.3 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Kanter's (2004) organisational decline. Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline is presented in its five stages with each stage explained in detail and being related to the study. Also discussed in detail was Kanter's (2004) organisational decline and how it related to the study. Tables were also

included on Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline to help understand the model better. The next chapter (Chapter Four) is on the research design and methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave the highlights of the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Kanter's (2004) organisational decline. This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology. It highlights how the participants were sampled and the instruments used to generate as well as analyse the data. Ethical considerations observed during the research process and limiting factors to the study conclude the chapter. A chapter summary is also included providing information on what has been discussed in the entire chapter and what will follow in Chapter Five.

#### 4.2 The research design and methodology

Research design is how the researcher carefully and procedurally generates and analyse acquired information from participants to answer the research questions. It is a data generation procedure which distinguishes a certain study from other observations (Christiansen, Bertram & Land, 2010). Burns and Grove (2005, p.195) also note a research design as "a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings". Similarly, Parahoo (1997, p.142) describes a research design as "a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be generated and analysed". From the above definitions, it is clear that a research design is a plan outlining how the study is conducted, including how data is generated and analysed, data generation tools used depending on whether the research is a qualitative or quantitative study and under which paradigm it falls into.

This is a qualitative study that utilised a case study approach. Numbers do not form the basis of qualitative research but rather is in form of words and what is observed (Punch, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), schools can be studied best in their naturalistic setting where the researcher can study different groups of people in such a setting. This type of research involves the researcher digging deep in participants responds to find emerging themes and meanings people assign to a phenomenon under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The study was carried out in a naturalistic setting in schools with the researcher trying to understand or ascribe

meanings to the phenomena of school decline and choice in Zimbabwean schools in terms of the understandings the participants brought to the phenomena through their responses to the research questions during the interviews.

The researcher chose to use a qualitative research design because of the various methods it uses such as personal accounts of participants, case studies and observations (Parkinson & Drislane, 2011). Another reason for using a qualitative approach in this research was describe and explore the views of the school management team members and parents on school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools. A qualitative approach was appropriate to capture the opinions of the school management team members and parents on school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools due to the method used like the interview. According to Flick (2008), a limitation of a qualitative study in a social science is the low degree of applicability of results and the problem of connecting them to theory and societal developments are taken as indicators of disenchantment between the social science - their methods and their findings. The above limitation does not limit my study since I was not interested in the application of results but rather on the understanding, explanations and sense or interpretation on the phenomena of school decline and choice in Zimbabwean schools in terms of the meaning the SMTs and parents bring to them through their responses to the research questions during the interviews.

A qualitative case study examines a phenomenon within its real-life context. Data are generated on or about a single individual, group, or event. In some cases, several cases or events may be studied. The primary purpose of a case study is to understand something that is unique to the case(s) (Creswell, 2013). Case studies are “a step to action’. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insight is directly interpreted and they should be used, for staff or individual self-development, for within institutional feedback, for formative evaluation and in educational policy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Case studies have advantages over historical studies which includes direct observations and interviews with participants (Yin, 2009). According to Cohen, *et. al.* (2011), the following are the advantages of a case study that makes it attractive to educational evaluators or researchers: case studies allow generalisations either about an instance to a class; their particular strength lies in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right; the results are more



easily understood by a wide range of audiences (including non-academics) as they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language; they are strong on reality and they can be taken by a single researcher without needing a full research team (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). These researchers further note the following weaknesses of case studies as method of research; results may not be generalised except where other readers/researchers see their application. They are not easily open to cross checking; hence they may be selective, biased, personal and subjective. Case studies are prone to problems of observer bias, despite attempts made to address reflexivity (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). As a researcher considering the above weaknesses noted in my chosen method of research I had to triangulate my methods of data generation (interviews, observations and documents review) and also my participants included the SMTs from schools and also parents who share different knowledge on the phenomena of school decline and choice in Zimbabwean schools to ensure the trustworthiness of the data that were generated.

### **4.3 Research paradigm**

A research paradigm represents a particular world view that defines, for the researchers who carry this view, what is acceptable to research and how (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). Within a paradigm it is given: what kind of questions are supposed to be asked? What can be observed and investigated? How to generate data? and how to interpret the findings (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). According to Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), there are three main paradigms: the post-positivist, the interpretivist and the critical paradigm. Creswell (2007) notes that they are four main paradigms the post-positivist, the interpretivist, the critical and the post-modernism paradigm. This shows the controversy on the paradigms that underpins research in education. This study utilised an interpretive paradigm which aimed to understand the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe. Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), also state that under the interpretive paradigm, the researchers recognise multiple interpretations as equally valid, results are created and not found and also the use of the dialogical and in-depth exploration methods like interviews.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggest that ontological assumptions (assumptions about the phenomena) result into epistemological assumptions (ways of researching and enquiring into the nature of reality and the phenomena; these in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data generation. Tuli (2011) notes that research paradigms affect selection of the method of research,

focusing on the assumptions about the nature of reality and humanity (ontology), the theoretical framework of the study (epistemology), and ways of acquiring the required information (methodology).

Any research is shaped and defined by the epistemology, ontology and methodology in the nature of social science research (Popkewitz, Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1979). According to Tuli (2011), epistemological questions are: Is there any relationship between the researcher and what is being researched? What is the basis of the knowledge we know? How is knowledge constructed? The constructive interpretive paradigm constitutes most of the qualitative studies and views the world as a social construct which is understood and explained by people's social interactions, interpretations and experiences (Maxwell, 2006; Bogdan & Biklen, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 2009). The interpretive paradigm aims to interpret and understand a particular phenomenon in naturalistic setting and does not seek to generalise the results to the wider population (Farzanfar, 2005). Phenomenon in the interpretive paradigm is studied in a naturalistic setting with the researchers being non-controlling, unbiased and unassuming since they study the phenomenon as it develops in the real-world situation.

The research utilised qualitative methodologies to generate the required information from the participants to answer the key study questions. Methods in qualitative study do not focus on generalising the findings but rather concerned with understanding and interpreting a phenomenon under study in their naturalistic setting (Ulin, Robinson & Tolley, 2004). Interpretive and positivist researchers believe that people can be studied and they behave in a set predictable behaviours and patterns. Such predictable patterns under the interpretive paradigm are formed as people interact with each other in the societal system (Neuman, 2003). Understanding phenomena under study is the basis of interpretive researchers through first-hand involvements, honest commentary and extracts of real discussion from participants' viewpoints (Merriam, 2009). The most used methods in qualitative studies are focus group discussions, unobtrusive observations and interviews both individual and focus group. According to Tuli (2011), credibility and trustworthiness form the basis of research under the interpretivist paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) qualitative reports are based on dependability and reliability.

The nature of reality in social science studies is questioned ontologically. In research two extremes are highlighted: independent truth from objectivism and constructionism that accepts

that truth is the creation of people interaction (Neuman, 2003). Interpretive researchers believe reality exist through human construct which the interaction of people in their societies (Mutch, 2005). Reality is socially constructed and different situations in the society make people to also have different contextual realities. Researchers in the interpretive paradigm explore, make meaning and define societal truths (Bassey, 1995; Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). Study findings in research using qualitative methodology are frequently informed by descriptive words (Mutch, 2005). My study findings were presented in descriptive words and included direct quotations from the interviewees' responses.

In a qualitative study people are presented as participants as opposed to objects under the positivist study approach. The participants in qualitative study through their personal understandings, meanings and experience of the phenomenon under study write their own life through their first-hand information (Casey, 1993). Participants are given the opportunity to ascribe meanings to the phenomenon under research according to their own contextual interaction with their own particular environments. The procedure gives the participants the freedom to express their ideas since they are the constructors of their own knowledge and their meanings vary according to their own understandings and experiences within their natural settings (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011).

Translating the ontological and epistemological ideologies into procedures of conducting the research is called research methodology (Sarantakos, 2005), and values, processes and procedures that direct the investigation (Kazdin, 1992, 2003a, cited in Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005). Methodology in qualitative research is guided by constructionist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. Meaning of the phenomenon under research is found in the responds of the participants which are informed by their various experiences and understandings (Merriman, 2009). Research utilising qualitative methodology enables the researchers to engage in a society or community through observations of its populaces and the way they live, usually taking part in happenings, asking questions from the targeted sample, listening to life experiences, coming up with case that can be studied and documents analysis or other ethnic pieces. The aim of research under qualitative study is to obtain an insider's view and first-hand experience of the individuals being researched (Tuli, 2011).

Lavrakas (2008) notes that shared sets of ideologies and attitudes by a particular group of researchers are called a paradigm. A paradigm governs how followers of a research community interpret both the phenomenon their own community studies and the methods of research that they should utilise to research the phenomenon. A paradigm is the gross that comprises of what researchers view as epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research utilised the interpretivist paradigm.

#### **4.4 Sampling**

Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) note that persons, objects and actions highlighting features of the greater group in research is called a sample. Sampling is the process of choosing a sample. According to Gay, *et. al.* (2009), sampling includes defining the populace to which outcomes will be generalisable. According to them, there are no hard and fast numbers that represent the correct number of participants in a qualitative study. There are two general indicators used to determine whether a sample is of sufficient size and these are representativeness and redundancy of information.

Sampling is especially important in the integrated process of research because pitfalls are common, often leading to faulty conclusions and improper inferences about those in the larger population who were not studied (Suter, 2006). According to Cohen, *et. al.* (2011), obtaining data from the larger populace is impossible due to the time, affordability and convenience. In this study the population was the school management members (principals, deputies and heads of department) and parents of the learners of both Umambo and Tagwinya High School in the Chipinge District, Zimbabwe. The sample size of this study was twenty members from both schools. The population included two principals, two deputies and three heads of department of both schools to make them ten and ten parents, five from each school.

According to Cohen, *et. al.* (2011), note that non-probability and purposive sampling are used in qualitative case studies to represent the wider population. They argue that qualitative researchers emphasise on the snootiness, the idiographic and exclusive distinctiveness of the phenomenon, cluster or persons to be studied. In this research the sample was made up of members of the school management teams of both schools (two principals, two deputy principals, and three HODs per school), only those who carry out management tasks in schools and five parents per

school who choose schools to educate their offspring. Purposive sampling was utilised in this study. Cohen, *et. al.*, (2011) assert that in purposive sampling, often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, is that the sample is chosen by the researcher based on his personal discretion on what constitute the required characteristics of the participants. Through this process a sample with specific needs is chosen. A purposive sample was chosen for a specific purpose, SMTs of both schools were chosen because they were the ones who were most knowledgeable on the phenomenon of school decline, choice and learner migration since they are the manager of the institutes. Also, the parents of both school are seen to provide some important information about school decline and choice since they are stakeholders in the school governing bodies of the schools, also have reasons for choosing certain institutions over others, reasons for moving their offspring from a particular institute to another and lastly they have an ideal idea of a perfect school for their children. Cohen, *et. al.*, (2011) note that whilst purposive sampling includes the participants with required characteristics, it mostly do not represent the entire populace and this is because of bias and unashamedly selectivity on the researcher's part.

#### **4.5 Methods or instruments chosen for data generation**

According to Gay, *et. al.* (2009), data generation is also called fieldwork. Data generation includes taking a huge amount of time in the environment or field of research (schools), the researcher familiarising with the environment and generating data through interviews and observation. Researchers in qualitative studies generate visual-non-numeric and descriptive-narrative data to advance insight into the phenomenon under study. Methods of gathering data in qualitative research includes observations, questionnaires, interviews, personal and official documents, phone calls, recording, drawing, photographs, email messages and responses, informal conversations and journals (Gay, *et. al.*, 2009). This study utilised interviews, personal and official records and observations to generate the data needed to answer the research questions.

##### **4.5.1 Interviews**

A question and answer session between the participant and the researcher is called an interview. This is a carefully planned discussion where the researcher requires particular knowledge or data from the participants through asking them carefully though question and probing further to get

rich data if necessary (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). According to Mason (2010, p.62), 'qualitative interviewing' refers to comprehensive, loosely structured or semi-structured methods of interviewing. The semi-structured interviews are an open situation that gives flexibility and freedom for both the researcher and the respondents (the interviewer and the interviewee). The most acknowledged method in qualitative research is interviews (Mason, 2010).

The researcher used semi-structured interviews because they enabled the interviewer and the interviewee to have a planned conversation on the phenomena understand in their various settings using their understandings and experiences (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). Interviews are not rigid as a method of generating data, it involves the use of various senses which are hearing, sight and spoken. According to Cohen, *et. al.* (2011), interviews as a method of data generation can be controlled by the researcher through giving the respondents time to think through their answers, clarify the questions and probing to get quality data. Also according to them, interviews have the following disadvantages: they are time consuming and expensive to administer, prone to bias on both the interviewer and interviewee, might inconvenient participants and issues of confidentiality may be problematic (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011).

In addition, Christiansen, *et. al.*, (2010) state that interpretivist researchers use the interview method extensively. The study used semi-structured interviews (with principals, deputy principals and other senior managers who are heads of departments) and parents to generate data. Participants were interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time convenient to them and permission was sought to voice-record all of them.

#### **4.5.2 Observations**

The researcher also gathered data through unstructured observations around the schools. Observations involve the recording of data, which could not easily be picked up through the interview process. Observations are widely used means of data generation in qualitative data and it takes many forms (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). An observation is looking (often systematically) and noting systematically (always) people, events, behaviours, settings, and artefacts, routine and so on (Suter, 2006). Observations were made around the schools; the researcher noted anything linked to the phenomenon of school decline, for example, state of school buildings, school properties, general school environment and the school sports facilities.

Gay, *et. al.*, (2009) note that observations are two ways either participant or non-participant observations. By observing the schools the researcher obtained much more information which he compares to the responses of the research participants' interview transcripts. Also, according to Gay, *et. al.* (2009), during non-participant observations, the researcher is not part of the setting under observation. The researchers observe then record what they see and do not engage or take part in environment being studied.

In addition, according to Briggs and Coleman (2007), observations can be affected by observer effects, concern on the part of those being observed and therefore, they will not behave normally leading to biased results (Hawthorne effect), and also bias on the part of the observer. This can be through selective attention, the observer selects what he wants to see and then interprets this from his or her perception and value. To avoid the Hawthorne effect I reassured the participants to behave in their normal way and in terms of observer bias, I did unstructured observations to eliminate the observer bias.

#### **4.5.3 Documents review**

Documents are “standardised artefacts, in so far they typically occur in particular formats: as notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, death certificates, remarks, diaries, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgments, letters or expert opinions” (Flick, 2008, p.46). According to Flick (2008), documents are most often available as texts (in a printed form), but they also have the form of an electronic file (a database for example). Robson (2002) acknowledges the following as institutional documents that can be studied in education: school formal syllabi, course outlines and documents, timetables, school posts both to parents and learners, communications and to letters to various stakeholders including non-written documents such as television programmes, films, photographs, educational cartoons and comic strips.

The following are the advantages of reviewing documents as part of data generation in research. Documents are unobtrusive and non-reactive. That is the enquirer does not need to be in direct contact with the person(s) producing the trace and hence there is no reason why the behaviour should be influenced by the enquiry. They also provide valuable cross-validation of other measures, either in support or disconfirmation of them. The final being that they encourage ingenuity and creativity on the part of the enquirer (Robson, 2002).

Documents review as a method of enquiry has its weakness such as ethical difficulties of researching without people's knowledge or consent (Robson, 2002). Another weakness is the availability and access of documents in some schools or areas of study. The letters to the school principals asked for approval to research their schools, to review their school documents and the list of documents was provided in the letter. This study utilised the following documents from the schools: teachers' record books, student attendance register, examination pass rates, communication to parents, minutes of meeting in schools and with parents, transfer records, enrolment figures, disciplinary records and figures of expelled students. Documents were reviewed because they provided data that was useful in cross-validation of other measures, either in support or disconfirmation of the other data generated through interviews.

Documents provide an unobtrusive and stable source of data that, on occasion, is the only source of evidence on some issues (Flick, 2008). Documents were reviewed to give the actual percentages in decline in one school and also to show the maintained academic achievement of the other school, transfer percentages and enrolment percentages of both schools.

#### **4.6 Data analysis**

Briggs and Coleman (2007) state that data analysis for qualitative research means sense making and bringing value out of the information that had been gathered and making sure that decisions are acceptable under the research procedures, the framework in which it will be done and the participants. Yin (2009) makes the point that the analysis of data is an iterative process, the researcher has to go back through the data several times to ensure that all the data fit the interpretations given or conclusions drawn, without unexplained anomalies or contradictions (the constant comparison method), that all the data are accounted for and the significant features of the case are highlighted.

In this study, I analysed data according to De Vos (2010) model, which states that analysing data involves sorting, structuring and sense making of the generated data. In addition, the model notes that it is a process that is disorganised, unclear, laborious, innovative and interesting process. According to De Vos (2010), researchers should record and analyse the interviews as soon as they are done; preliminary coding is necessary. To raise credibility of interviews the researcher can send back the interviews to participants for approval. Data generated through interviews



were encoded to find patterns, categories and meanings through reading the interview transcripts to further analyse what the respondents said.

De Vos (2010) has adapted Creswell's (1988) analytic spiral model by Marshall and Rossman's model (1999) to analyse data. De Vos (2010) suggests the following stages when analysing data: a careful procedural plan for data recording; information generation and introductory analyses; data handling procedures; understanding and producing memos; creating classifications; sub-headings and outlines; coding the information; cross checking the evolving understandings; looking for other descriptions and expressions; visualising (producing the thesis). The researchers must plan in advance how to record the data in a procedural way that is suitable for both the environment and researched sample which should enable analysis, before data generation begins (De Vos, 2010). Also, De Vos (2010) notes that researchers must exhibit consciousness of the methods for recording observations, relations and interviews that should not affect the way the participants interact in their natural setting.

Analysing data is a double-fold approach in a qualitative inquiry. Step one includes the preliminary data analysis of the generated data in the natural setting. Secondly analysing data away from the location, after the generation of data is finished. Furthermore, De Vos (2010) also notes that this principle of interaction between data generation is one of the major features that distinguishes qualitative research from traditional research. In terms of managing and organising data, De Vos (2010) articulates that the transition between fieldwork and analysis is a point of transition between data generation and analysis. Transcribing interviews or notes offers is the changeover between generating data and analysing, as a process of information generation and management and planning. Typing and organising the researchers recording notes gives the researcher the chance to engage with the data in the process between fieldwork and the actual analysis, an opportunity to get a sense of the entire cumulative data from the study (De Vos, 2010).

In coding data Marshall and Rossman (1999) who are cited by De Vos (2010), note that it is a process of putting ideas in an intellectual manner. It involves the researcher's intellectual intuition in analysing the classifications themes and generated. Coding brings order on the data generated through creating distinct classifications and emerging themes. Codes may be represented by: coloured dots and numbers or abbreviations of key words, it is up to the

researcher to choose (De Vos, 2010). It is possible for new explanations and understandings to emerge, demanding a change of the initial strategy.

It is through coding that those themes and classifications emerge, De Vos (2010) states that researchers have to assess the acceptability of their emerging identifications searching for their existence in the gathered data. This enables a cross examination where the researcher has to evaluate the emerging themes looking for negative tendencies in the pattern and including them in the findings if need be. This process also includes evaluating the importance of some of the data gathered and identifying where it is useful. I determined how useful the data are in answering the research questions and how they understand and explain the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools.

De Vos (2010) notes that the researcher discovers categories and patterns in the data, he should engage in critically challenging the very patterns that seem so apparent. The researcher should search for other, plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them. Alternative explanations always exist; the researcher must search for, identify and describe them, and then demonstrate why the explanations offered are the most plausible of all (De Vos, 2010).

According to De Vos (2010), writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process. It is central to that process, for in the choice of particular words to summarise and reflect the complexity of the data, the researcher will be engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form meaning to massive amounts of raw data. He suggests that at the proposal stage the researcher considers what modalities will be used for final reporting. For dissertations, this is typically done by outlining the chapters to be included in the final document. For funded research proposals, reporting may entail periodic written reports as well as other forms of dissemination. Despite interest in alternative dissemination strategies and reporting formats, the written report remains the primary mode for reporting the results of research.

In line with De Vos's (2010) model, I did data reduction, presentation and interpretation. I used unstructured observations and documents review where, the categories of behaviour are not properly delineated so that I could find patterns and categories according to my understanding of school decline, choice and learner migration in the Zimbabwean schools.

#### 4.7 Ethical considerations

Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), note that ethics in research is very important, particularly with research involving humans and animals. This is largely because the subjects of the research in the social science are people and they often behave and respond in more complex ways than plants or chemicals. The authors also note that people's response differ in a given situation and depends largely on their past experience and circumstances and thus their context is very important. Since the study falls under the interpretive paradigm, researchers do not aim to predict what people will do, but rather to describe how people make sense of their worlds, and how they make meaning of their particular actions. Cohen, *et. al.*, (2011) assert the same when they note that the awareness of ethical concerns in research is reflected in the growth of relevant literature and in the appearance of regulatory codes of research practice formulated by various agencies and professional bodies.

It is important that all research studies follow certain ethical principles. These principles are: autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2001, p.66, cited by Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). Other important ethical issues raised by Cohen, *et. al.*, (2011) are informed consent; access and acceptance; anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed consent has been defined by Diener and Crandall (1978, p.57) as 'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions'. This definition involves four elements: 'competence' which implies responsible, mature individuals will make correct decisions if they are given the relevant information; 'voluntarism' entails that participants freely choose to take part (or not) in the research and guarantees that exposure to risks is undertaken knowingly and voluntarily; 'full information' implies that consent is fully informed of the research and 'comprehension' refers to the fact that participants fully understand the nature of the research project, even when procedures are complicated and entail risks (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011, p.78).

I got the consent of the participants through writing them letters asking them to volunteer to be part of the study, assured them the freedom to withdraw at anytime and also got their consent to voice-record the interviews. I also assured them in the letters that the study do not harm (non-maleficence) in anyway physical, emotional and social. In the letters I highlighted that the

research is beneficial to the schools under study and also to the community at large because as noted by Duke (2008), school decline is a strange and interesting phenomenon in that less is known about it, and less people seem to want to know about it.

Another important aspect of ethics in research is anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) underline the need for confidentiality of participants' identities and that any violations of this should be made with the agreement of the participants. The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity either individual or organisational (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). In my letters to participants, I assured them of their confidentiality of the information they will supply and that pseudonyms are to be used instead of the actual names. I also assured them protection of their identities of the schools and individuals when results are published. I assured the participants that the correct channels for ethical clearance as stipulated by the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be followed. I assured the participants that the data generated is to be kept by the Project leader (in his office Room G310, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal). Also that after five years, documents will be shredded and voice-recordings will be incinerated.

The relevance of the principle of informed consent becomes apparent at the initial stage of the research project – that of access to the institutions or organisation where the research is to be conducted and acceptance by those whose permission one needs before embarking on the task (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). I wrote a letter to the Chipinge District Educational Office (in Zimbabwe) asking for permission and consent to undertake the research. Also, letters were sent to the principals of the participating schools asking permission to undertake the research in their schools. I wrote letters to the parents and members of the SMT from both schools asking their consent to take part in the research and also in the letters the study was explained to them in brief so that the participants had enough information of what constitutes the study, their role and seeking their consent to voice-record the interviews.

#### **4.8 Issues of trustworthiness**

Christiansen, *et. al.* (2010), cite trustworthiness as a term used by Guba and Lincoln (1994) for qualitative research. They describe that in the interpretive paradigm the concepts of credibility

(do the findings reflect the reality and lived experiences of the participants), transferability (to what extent can the research be transferred to another context), dependability and conformability may be used. I used mechanical means to record the data, the use of a voice recorder to record interviews verbatim, meaning transcripts were more accurate than if I simply jotted down notes during the interview. This is to improve trustworthiness and reliability. To ensure trustworthiness of data, multi-methods to generate (observations, documents reviews and interviews) and cross-checking of data was used. Also multiple sources of data from the SMTs in schools and parents on school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwean schools were used assist to ensure trustworthiness of data.

#### **4.9 Triangulation**

Triangulation typically refers to the generation of data from a number of different sources (Christiansen, *et. al.*, 2010). According to Cohen, *et. al.* (2011), triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data generation in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. In this study it was considered in two forms, multiple data sources and multiple methods. Triangulation under multiple methods of data generation included interviews, observations and documents review. Triangulation of multiple data sources included the school management team members who hold different school positions (principals, deputies and heads of department) and parents. This enabled me to see if the data generated from one source confirms or contradicts the data which was generated from a different source.

Reliability is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents (Cohen, *et. al.*, 2011). It is relevant to both quantitative and qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) prefer to replace 'reliability' with terms such as 'credibility', 'neutrality', 'conformability', 'dependability', 'consistency', 'applicability', 'trustworthiness' and 'transferability', in particular the notion of 'dependability'. In terms of reliability the responses of respondents were voice-recorded so that transcriptions were done later to ensure that no data was lost during recording. Reliability is also ensured through the use of documents review of school enrolment figures and academic pass rates.

#### **4.10 Limitations to the study**

In terms of logistical problems, time management was a limitation in terms of meeting appointments through travelling using public transport to schools because public transport was not reliable. I overcame this problem through making appointments with the participants at their convenient times even after work and I also borrowed my parent's car until I finished the study. Another problem was getting permission from the school heads and other participants for them to take part in my research. The participants were intimidated by the interviews and others did not feel comfortable being voice-recorded. I encouraged people to feel comfortable as much as possible and I guaranteed them of their anonymity and that their responses are only used for research and nothing else and they will be kept safe with my supervisor at the university safe house and that when writing my research I will use pseudonyms and that they should feel free to respond to the questions in the language they are comfortable with. Another problem was that the management was not happy to reveal information about the school and getting access to the schools and making arrangements for the interviews. I got the chance to explain the importance of the study to the participants and I also told them that the results will only be used for the study and no one will know their school due to the principles of ethics in research. Finally I asked for their consent and told them that their participation is voluntary and people are allowed to withdraw at anytime. The final problem was arranging time with parents for the interviews. I was patient with them and did the interviews at the times convenient to them. One limitation of this study was that it is often heard that case studies, being idiographic, have limited generalisability (Yin, 2009). The results are not generalisable to the wider population of schools in Zimbabwe. The other limitation was that due to time constraint the participants were not interviewed up to the stipulated times and some gave false information especially on school decline when they were voice-recorded. A further limitation was that the study only included two schools out of the thousand schools in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.11 Chapter summary**

The chapter has outlined the research design and methodology. It highlighted how the participants were sampled including the sample size and the instruments that were used to generate data as well as its analysis. Ethical considerations were also presented and how they were observed during the research process and limiting factors to the study concluded the

chapter. The following chapter (Chapter Five) is on data presentation and analysis using the participants' interview responses, observations made and documents that were reviewed. In data analysis, the literature review and the two theoretical frameworks presented in the preceding chapter are used.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology of the research. This chapter is on data presentation and analysis using the participants' interview responses, observations made and documents that were reviewed. In addition, the researcher wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were not lost and therefore verbatim quotations are used in the data presentation. The emerging themes are then presented and discussed in terms of the research questions generated in Chapter One and the literature reviewed, conceptual and theoretical tools outlined in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

#### 5.2 Presentation of data from the field

The section below presents the findings from the data generated from the field and is presented thematically based on the research questions.

##### 5.2.1 Understanding of school decline

Most of the participants seemed to have varied understandings of school decline. They understood it to mean: deterioration of school buildings and infrastructure; standards have dropped in terms of teaching and learning; decline in terms of the values and attitudes of children towards education; poor performance of students at Ordinary level; decrease in the quality of the teaching staff; decline in terms of pupil enrolment over time and erosion of a culture of teaching and learning

The following are the responses of the both participants (the parents and the school management team members of both schools) in support of the above meanings ascribed to school decline. Mr Mbongoro, the Deputy Principal of Umambo High School, said:

*School decline, is a situation whereby the pass rate is going down in terms of Ordinary level or Advanced level at the public examinations. Actually few learners managing to get five O levels and above or even in sporting activities it is also going down. The school cannot participate beyond the zonal level so*



*actually it is declining in terms of sports. Also in terms of infrastructure that we have it is actually declining and even enrolment, the total number of learners enrolled per year is actually going down. The effectiveness of the school has declined; it is no longer effective as it used to be. (Mr Mbongoro)*

Mr Gushungo, the Head of Department of the same school, shared the same understanding in his response:

*School decline is a situation where the performance is going down - that is, the negative growth in terms of the performance of the school, in terms of pass rates and behaviour of the children and also enrolment of the learners. Signs and symptoms of school decline can be teachers and learners transferring out of these schools. (Mr Gushungo)*

In line with the above understandings, Mr Sazi, the Head of Department of English in Tagwinya High School, said:

*School decline is a general fall in academic excellence in the schools. Probably we might also look at the question of enrolment that at times the school enrolment might happen to be going down or falling over time. (Mr Sazi)*

In addition from the same school and also occupying the same position in the History department, Mrs Chirandu, understood school decline as:

*School decline is a situation whereby an organisation fails to obtain its set goals and the school is no longer conducive for the production of good results. Also, probably the behaviour of the pupils is not geared towards the achieving of the set goals of the school. (Mrs Chirandu)*

Mrs Chirandu, also understood decline in the following way when she said:

*I can focus on the infrastructure of schools. You find some schools with classrooms that have no doors and some broken window-panes; cracks on the walls; few desks and pupils are writing on their laps. Also, the shortage of educational materials and behaviour of some students who are uncontrollable.*

*There is a time table but it might not be followed and nobody monitors whether the expected things are being done at the set time; and it would seem like everyone is doing whatever they want like the 'laissez faire' style of management which is not good for the production of good results. (Mrs Chirandu)*

Parents also understood school decline in the same way as most of the school management team members of both schools. Mr Svondo, from Umambo High School, said:

*School decline is manifested by the erosion of the culture of teaching and learning. Once there is a lack of teaching and learning you then see other characteristics such as learners not attending or high absenteeism, high school dropout, parents pulling their children out of the school and enrolment in that school going down. (Mr Svondo)*

Also, Mr Kukuru, a parent from Tagwinya High School, concurs with all the above participants when he said:

*School decline is whereby the school standards go down, be it academically, professionally or sports wise. I know of a school that has declined and it happens to be in my hometown. The school used to be a very good school, pass rates were very high and teachers were motivated but as time went by things seemed to have gone down. The pass rates have declined far too much beyond expectations and teachers are less motivated and fleeing from the school. (Mr Kukuru)*

The participants' responses seemed to be congruent with the literature I have reviewed on the phenomenon of school decline. Duke (2008) defines it as the process by which a school's ability to accomplish its student achievement goals diminishes over time. Similarly, Hawk (2008) defines school decline as the steady downward spiral that some schools experience when a complex set of influences interact with negative and unresolved outcomes. This is true as some participants noted that school decline as a process where the standards of teaching and learning, value of education, pass rates, learner performance and school infrastructure deteriorates over time.

Although there is little research on school decline in Africa, a recent unpublished study by Mthiyane, Bhengu and Bayeni (date unknown) in South Africa, had similar findings where school decline was understood to mean “school demise”, “school decay” or a school gradually falling apart by failing to produce good quality learner results. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, Faul (2009) notes that the Zimbabwean education system has declined which is shown by the poor performance of learners in the public examination pass rates.

In addition, Kanter’s (2004) theory also supports the above participants’ responses and the literature on school decline. She (Kanter) notes that unchecked cycles of decline can easily turn into death spirals. According to Kanter (2004), privacy, scapegoating, segregation and escaping, loss of confidence creates a losing streak which makes change and success seem unattainable and this accelerates the death spiral. Failure in organisations is caused by a lot of contributing problems that would have been building overtime and resulting into an irreversible downward trend of decline (*ibid*, 2004). Kanter (2004) also notes that putting a stop or reversing the downward trend is difficult and requires a lot of capital and introduction of both financial and human resources. This shows that if all those factors that are related to school decline, are not attended to, this will lead to the closure of the school as the last stage of decline which she referred to death spiral from the unchecked cycles of decline.

Furthermore, from the observations I did within the two schools, there was deterioration of the school infrastructure. In Tagwinya High School, buildings, classrooms, staff houses, laboratories and sporting facilities were in a state of decline. The school buildings were in a dilapidated state needing renovation and repainting which showed that the schools had declined indeed. Some classes in Tagwinya High School needed renovations and replacement of the ceiling because it seemed water would come in if it rained, windows and doors were broken, with the school fence vandalised such that there were multiple entrances in and out of the school allowing people and animals to disturb the teaching and learning due to limited school privacy. This showed that the school was in a state of decline and needed intervention to save its existence and this was in line with what the participants said in the interviews.

The documents reviewed of both schools showed the following in terms of pass rates: Umambo High School had managed to maintain its high academic achievement since 2003 when it had 80% and has since increased to 98.2% by 2012. In terms of enrolment the school has since built new classroom blocks to cater for its ever increasing learners. In contrast, Tagwinya High School showed signs of decline in their pass rates which had gone down from 90.4% in 2003 to 58% by 2012. This is also supported by literature as a school declines, also its enrolment is most likely to be in decline since there were no new classrooms to accommodate new learners as opposed to Umambo High School.

The participants' understanding of decline as to mean: decline in students' academic pass rates, decrease in enrolment over time, deteriorating of school infrastructures and dropping in standards of teaching and learning and the value of education in the society was supported by the literature that was reviewed above. Also in support of the understandings were the observations in Tagwinya High School of the dilapidated school buildings and classroom and poor housing conditions of teachers' showings signs of school decline. The documents reviewed also supported the participants understanding of school decline when it was evident that Tagwinya High School has declined since the pass rates have been falling over time from 90.4% in 2003 to 58% in 2012.

## **5.2.2 The causes of school decline of once reputable schools in Zimbabwe**

Most of the participants identified the following as the major causes of schools to decline that were once reputable in the country as a whole: socio-economic conditions and the poor economy of Zimbabwe; politics both (national and school politics); lack of funding and resources towards education; incentives for teachers; poor leadership and management and the leaving of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries (South Africa and Botswana); low teacher morale; poor attitude of students to learning and children's rights.

### **5.2.2.1 Socio-economic conditions, the poor economy of Zimbabwe and politics both (national and school politics)**

The participants seemed to agree that socio-economic conditions, the poor state of the economy of Zimbabwe and politics both (national and local/school politics) constitute the major causes of

school decline in Zimbabwe. The following are their response in support to the above mentioned causes.

Mr Ndzwa, a Head of Department of Science in Umambo High School, said:

*We can look at things like the provision of incentives to the teachers in certain schools like my school. No matter how small it is, it contributes to teacher retention because where there are no incentives no one would want to work in such a school. Besides incentives, it could be political if we look at other things. Political reasons people would go or leave because of political violence. Victimization of people because of political association with the opposition parties other than the ruling party was also a factor. Some teachers had to leave certain schools and the country sometimes causing some schools to decline.*  
(Mr Ndzwa)

In agreement with the above, the Head of Department of English from Tangwinya High School, Mr Sazi, said:

*There are heterogeneous and extrogeneous factors. Factors within the school: the administration within the school; availability of text books within the school and also probably motivation amongst the teachers. Extrogeneous factors are the economic, political and social factors. Economic factors are the ability of parents to actually acquire or to provide resources to their children for learning and the capability of the government to look into the issue of resources and teaching and learning requirements in schools. A social factor is a number of our schools learners who drop out of school to go down to South Africa to seek employment.*  
(Mr Sazi)

The following causes were identified by Mr Zizha, a parent from Umambo High School, in line with the above theme:

*It is mainly two issues and the first one is the political issues prior to the presidential elections held in 2008 and immediately after those elections so many things were happening disrupting the once reputable schools. Chilo High School*

*(not its real name), a private school, used to be one of the best schools in terms of infrastructure and also producing the best students. It was ranked one of the best schools in Zimbabwe but when this political victimisation began in 2008, the school was targeted because it had the majority of its learners who were whites. The school was victimised because the politicians were saying whites were rallying behind the opposition and were prepared to victimise the whites to an extent of white learners and teachers leaving the school to other schools outside the country that was the main issue of politics in Zimbabwe. (Mr Zizha)*

In addition, Mr Zizha, also had the following to say:

*The other issue is the economy of Zimbabwe. From the year 2000 up to today, the economy of Zimbabwe has been in shambles. The economy of Zimbabwe has not been working and it has affected so many other things including education. The Zimbabwean Schools Examination Council which is entrusted to administer exams in Zimbabwe, was malfunctioning mainly because they did not have money to employ teachers to mark the examinations and also enough funds to produce adequate papers for children to write so that alone affected once reputed schools just because of the poor economy. (Mr Zizha)*

Also, in support of the above, Mr Muvhuro, a parent of the same school, said:

*I would mention the economic hardships and the political instabilities of the country as the major causes of school decline. I did my High Schooling in a mission school. This was one of the top boarding schools in the Masvingo area but if I tell you now because of the economic issues the boarding facility has been closed, the mission itself was turned into a rural day school. (Mr Muvhuro)*

Mrs Nzira, a parent from Tagwinya High School, also responded in concurrence with the above mentioned cause as follows:

*Sometimes it is the political instability whereby teachers were harassed by nearby communities saying they support the opposition party so they ran away and did not come back and did not attend lessons. The other thing was the*

*government salaries which are really low and the teachers are not motivated to work but if you see where the teachers are given incentives, they are motivated to work as they are compensated somehow. (Mrs. Nzira)*

Literature is in agreement with the above causes of school decline. According to Tendi (2009), teachers and schools in Zimbabwe, have been subjected to political victimisation since 2000 till today. In support of the above Cole (2010), also notes that Zimbabwean teachers were politically victimised, tortured and others killed since 2000 especially in the rural areas. Consequently, this led to school decline and poor teaching and learning due to the fleeing of qualified teachers to the neighbouring countries in pursuit of safer working environment and better working conditions there.

The following literature in line with the economic meltdown of Zimbabwe as contributing to school decline. Tendi (2009) notes that some schools in Zimbabwe showed signs of decline which was aggravated by the economic meltdown which started in 2006 up to 2010. In agreement, by 2007, per capita GDP was estimated at \$200, compared to \$900 in 1990, while over 80% of the Zimbabwean population was reported in 2005 to be living on less than \$2 a day (Mlambo & Raftopoulos, 2010, p.3). Schools that were once reputable for good academic achievement went into decline for various reasons such as loss of senior staff looking for better working conditions outside the country, lack of financial resources to manage the schools, buy textbooks and necessary equipment to facilitate effective teaching and learning to take place and also learner migration in the search of better schools, leaving some schools in a spiral of decline.

In addition, the observations I made in the two schools showed that there have not been any recent developments of infrastructure in Tagwinya High School and this has been attributed to poor government financing of schools due to the economic meltdown in the country. There were no new buildings, only old buildings which were in need of attention and there were no signs of any upcoming projects due to lack of funds in Tagwinya High School. Also, in Tagwinya High School, most of the students did not wear blazers or track suits with the school logo which shows a lack of school pride and this could be due to affordability. Most students seemed to come from less privileged families as compared to Umambo High School and some of them could not afford a full school uniform. The adopted school policy of not chasing learners owing the school, also

shows evidence of the meltdown of the country's economy where parents are failing to pay school fees for their children.

Socio-economic conditions, the poor economy of Zimbabwe and politics both (national and school politics) have been shown to be the major cause of school decline in Zimbabwe. This was supported by the participants' responses and also the literature that was reviewed. To strengthen the above were observations made in the two schools especially in Tagwinya High School which showed no infrastructural development due to lack of funds from both the government and the school itself.

### **5.2.2.2 Lack of funding and resources towards education and incentives for teachers**

The findings from the participants also included lack of funding and resources towards education and incentives for teachers as some of the major causes of schools to decline in Zimbabwe. The participants indicated the following in their support of the causes.

Mr Ndanzwa, the Head of Department of Umambo High School, said:

*Lack of resources at a school, lack of learning materials, shortage of instructors or teachers at a school are some of the factors that can contribute to school decline. (Mr Ndanzwa)*

In addition, to the above, Mrs Chitate, the Deputy Principal of Tagwinya High School, said:

*The decline of the academic performance is caused by the low motivation of teachers. Where teachers are getting paid high incentives in monetary form performance is high as well because they are motivated to work hard. In schools that do not give incentives to teachers, the performance of such schools is very low in terms of pass rates. Schools that offer high incentives attract the best teachers and their pass rates are high. The schools with low incentives are actually disadvantaged. In Zimbabwe this issue of incentives has a lot to play in the decline of schools. (Mrs Chitate)*



Furthermore, Mr Chitatu, a parent of Umambo High School, said:

*Generally, the shortage of resources has also led to their decline. The school, I went to has declined, the school pass rates were one of the highly rated in Masvingo province but now it is no longer on the list of high academic achievers in the country. (Mr Chitatu)*

Likewise, Mrs Nzira, a parent from Tagwinya High School, noted that:

*The other thing, the government salaries are really low and the teachers are not motivated to work but if you see where the teachers are being given incentives they are motivated to work since they are compensated somehow. Unlike rural teachers who are not given incentives for motivation, waiting for that low lowest salary from the government. I think teachers are not motivated which reduces the pass rates in schools. (Mrs Nzira)*

Cole (2010) notes that the inadequate financial resources to renovate dilapidated buildings and improving infrastructure like classrooms and libraries, providing textbooks and employing qualified personnel has led to the further decline of education in Zimbabwe. In addition, Pollock (2010) also notes that parents have resorted to assuming government duties of retaining qualified teachers in schools by compensating their little salary by incentives to reduce staff turnover. Due to the poor salaries of teachers, schools have resorted to giving teachers incentives to keep them in schools and this shows school decline since parents have to pay more to keep teachers at work, which is the job of the government.

In support of the above, observations in Tagwinya High School showed stagnant development in infrastructure and also dilapidated classrooms. All this was attributed to lack of financial resources to renovate the dilapidated buildings and also to build new classrooms. Also, the school could not afford furniture because some classrooms did not even have furniture and the learners had to share the little available broken furniture.

Lack of funding and resources towards education and incentives for teachers constituted the causes of schools to decline in Zimbabwe. This was in line with the participants' responses and the literature that was reviewed. Also the observations made in Tagwinya High School showed

the importance of funding and resources to maintain and renovate the school infrastructure to fight school decline.

### **5.2.2.3 The departure of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries**

Another finding was the departure of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries has caused the Zimbabwean schools to decline. Most of the participants seemed to share the sentiments when they responded in support of the above.

In support of this, Mr Ndanzwa, the Head of the Science department of Umambo High School, said:

*We have had of late a large number of teachers migrating from Zimbabwe into the Diaspora. That has had an effect because people are looking for greener pastures. Not only the Diaspora but also, other sectors of the economy like the Non-governmental organisations that is where especially the science teachers migrated too. (Mr Ndanzwa)*

In alignment with the response above, Mr Makaro, the Head of Department of Tagwinya High School, said:

*Some schools, for instance had a high staff turnover. They lost very competent and experienced teachers transferring to other schools. The decline of the pass rates can also come in as a factor. (Mr Makaro)*

Mr Zizha, a parent from Umambo High School, highlighted the following:

*The exodus of teachers. Teachers were leaving the country for greener pastures and flocked to the United Kingdom, some went to the USA and most went to South Africa and many Zimbabwean teachers are all over the world. I specifically left my job as a teacher in Zimbabwe at a school that was once reputable in Harare mainly because of the economy; the salary was too low I had to go for greener pastures to South Africa where I'm currently working. (Mr Zizha)*

In agreement with the above, Mr Chitatu, a parent of Umambo High School, said:

*Teacher movement as well is an indicator of school decline. If good teachers are leaving the school or the most experienced teachers, that is also an indicator of school decline. (Mr Chitatu)*

In addition to all the above, Mrs Chuma, a parent from Tagwinya High School, said:

*It all depends. Maybe some qualified and experienced teachers have transferred to better schools where there are incentives and better working conditions. Also, where they are given allowances so that at the end of the day you will find out that school which the teachers transferred from/deserted will end up not having experienced and qualified teachers which leads to decline of their pass rates. (Mrs Chuma)*

Literature is in congruent with the participants' responses in terms of teacher migration from schools or to other countries in search of better working conditions contributing to school decline. Wentzel and Tlabela (2006) identified an international trend where most qualified teachers from neighbouring countries (Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana and Zambia) of South Africa are migrating from their countries into South Africa. This migration is caused by a search of better working conditions, political peace and safer working environments and mostly a higher income as compared to their countries of origin.

Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) model of organisational decline seem to support this. According to their theory the stage two of failure is characterised by taking no action, in spite of symptoms of declining results. In business organisations, these symptoms can comprise of reduced profits, decline in sales volumes and high stock volumes (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In schools, these signs can include a decline in academic achievement pass rates, deteriorating of school buildings and properties, poor discipline in both staff and students (high absenteeism and poor conduct) and poor and incompetent school leadership and management. The school may see a decrease in student enrolment and increased staff turnover.

Also, the theoretical framework by Kanter (2004) consolidates the above-mentioned arguments of a declining school losing its best or most experienced teachers to other schools or countries.

Those who had opportunities were leaving which further reinforced the loser mentality and the feeling that one should jump off the ship before the “loser” label was applied (Kanter, 2004, p.93). Leaving the school before it further declines was an obvious choice for many.

The observations, in Tagwinya High School showed most of the buildings of the school in a dilapidated state, the teachers’ houses were overcrowded and lacked electricity and running water. These factors were likely to lead to higher teacher migration to neighbouring schools and countries in a search for better working conditions and environment.

The departure of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries has been shown to be a major cause of some schools in Zimbabwe to decline. Teachers especially the most experienced and the most qualified have been leaving Zimbabwe to the Diaspora and countries around Africa especially South Africa and Botswana in search of greener pastures. This was supported by the participants’ responses and the literature that was reviewed. Also in support was Kanter’s (2004) model that states that teachers are most likely to move out of a declining school before it further declines. Also in support were the observations which showed the poor housing conditions of teachers especially in Tagwinya High School which would contribute to teachers leaving the school to look for better working conditions across the border in neighbouring countries.

#### **5.2.2.4 Low teacher morale, poor attitude of students to learning and children’s rights.**

Most of the participants seemed to indicate low teacher morale, poor attitude of students to learning and children’s rights major causes of schools to decline in Zimbabwe. The following quotations are in support of this.

Mr Gushungo, the Head of Department from Umambo High School, highlights the following:

*In some cases, teachers are not paid and others are well paid and there is some form of correlation between payment and students performance which is a motive behind the performance of teachers. Of course, there are other reasons such as the attitude of learners. In some cases, even teachers who are not well paid but are committed to their work due to their attitude. We also have students who have*

*a negative attitude towards education so that on its own will lead to their academic performance going down. (Mr Gushungo)*

In addition, Mr Gushungo, also on the same matter said:

*School decline, it goes hand-in-hand with discipline. In some schools, discipline is well reinforced and in others there is lack of reinforcement on discipline such that pupils if they are not well disciplined they will not be geared towards their academic work. They will be too playful leading to their academic performance going down. (Mr Gushungo)*

Also in support, Mr Mabhiza, who occupied the same management position as Mr. Gushungo, said:

*The attitude of students especially, that is very common in day schools where most pupils are not concerned about their education especially in Chipinge. After completing their grade 7 they would choose not to continue with their education and to go to South Africa where they will go and get employed, but not all children. Some parents do not even encourage their children to get educated. (Mr Mabhiza)*

From Tagwinya High School, Mrs Chirandu had the following in support of the above school management team members:

*These days I feel strongly that there is this rising tide about children's rights mainly by non-governmental organisations. They have begun the awareness about the children rights. Schools that were once reputable were because of the discipline given to the school children-they were beaten or punished at times. They could even be expelled from schools but these days children have these rights to do their own thing. They are abusing these rights. They can even take absconding lessons as a right and the teachers might fail to control them because they argue along those lines and they even threaten to call Childline, complaining so that has been a source of problems in many schools. (Mrs Chirandu)*

Mr Svondo, a parent from Umambo High School, also had the same in mind when he said:

*I think what mainly causes school decline in Zimbabwe is that the teachers are not motivated to work, because of their salaries. For the children, there is little motivation to go to schools because of what is happening in the outside world. You can see educated people like teachers, but what they earn is far less than what somebody who is doing buying and selling in the streets gets. So, if you are a child you would say does education give me what I want in the future which is money or I should just go ahead and start making money anyway because even if I finish my education I will get qualifications but will end up not getting as much money as those involved in self-employment like buying and selling. So, from a contextual point of view, I can generalise this in Zimbabwe. (Mr Svondo)*

From Tagwinya High School, Mrs Chuma, a parent identified the same reasons with the above participants when she said:

*If you look at how the community is growing and the township has grown these children are occupied with certain things that have nothing to do with school work. Also as a result of the ethanol plant which is situated within the community you will find out those children, parents are busy making money going to the market, South Africa. Sometimes when they are not around the children take over the business by selling in the flea markets and the green market so at the end of the day they make a lot of money making them to see school as something insignificant because they can do without. (Mrs Chuma)*

Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) model of organisational decline state that school leaders in declining organisations tend to lose their vision and become autocratic. The leaders tend not share decision making and demand quick results from employees (Whetten, 1980b; Greenhaigh, 1983). Teachers who are observant of these difficulties and who are resistant to change, begin to display a reduction in obligation to the school (e.g., increased number of teachers leaving the school, decline in effort, sub-standard performance), which adds to the school's academic achievement problems in this stage (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). The above model supports the view that low morale and motivation of teachers at a school is caused by observations made that

the school is in decline. This will further lead to school decline since their effort and commitment to their jobs will further decline translating to poor or low academic achievement in the school pass rates.

Also, in agreement with the above is Kanter's (2004) model. This model notes that losing streaks begin in response to a sense of failure and failure makes people feel out of control. It is just one more step to a pervasive sense of powerlessness and powerlessness corrodes confidence. When there are few resources or coping mechanisms for dealing with problems, people fall back on almost primitive, self-protective behaviour. Nine pathologies begin to unfold, as an emotional and behavioural chain reaction: Communication decreases; criticism and blame increase; respect decrease; isolation increases; focus turns inwards; rifts widens and inequities grow; initiatives decrease; aspirations diminish and negativity spreads (Kanter, 2004). This shows that the staff would become less motivated and morale would be low, the same would be their attitude towards their work which would also be affected negatively. Consequently, the attitude of the school children would also be affected since the teachers would be paying less attention to them and their work.

Low teacher morale, poor attitude of students to learning and children's rights have been outlined as some of the major causes of school decline. This was supported by the participants' responses and also by the two theoretical frames. Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989), model of organisational decline states that low morale and motivation of teachers at a school is caused by observations they make of the school if it is in decline. Also, Kanter (2004) in her nine pathologies notes low teacher morale leading to school decline through decreased communication, decreased initiatives and criticism and increased blame.

#### **5.2.2.5 The link between management and school decline**

Most of the participants seemed to identify a link between the school management and school decline, the link being that weak and autocratic management (not involving teachers in decision making) causes schools to decline.

Mr Mbongoro, the Deputy Principal of Umambo High School, said:

*In some of the schools that I'm talking about that have declined. It is the leadership style the management adopts, some are autocratic they just pass what should be done to the subordinates without consultation. The management just came up with all the plans, all the decisions were made by a few individuals or the management. They wanted that to cascade down to the subordinates. Now these subordinates would not take these decisions whole-heartedly because it is the management's decisions and they were never consulted. (Mr Mbongoro)*

In addition, Mr Mbongoro also said:

*Teachers are not being involved in decision making for example they want to introduce a new subject they just introduce it without the knowledge of the subordinates the teachers who are actually the foot soldiers on the ground. Yet they are the people who actually undertake those tasks. They are not consulted and if this happens teachers will not be enthusiastic or motivated. But if they are consulted they will say it is our decision and it is ours in a way. Leadership and management have contributed to school decline. (Mr Mbongoro)*

Also, from the same school, Mr Bhiza, a Head of Department also noted this:

*Yes, Management actually determines the way teachers and students perform in a school. Supervision of teachers' work has a bearing on the performance of students. So most or some schools actually complain about lack of supervision. Lack of supervision is one of the management practices that can lead to school decline. As a manager you have to ensure everything is done and is done in the right way and timeously. (Mr Bhiza)*

Mr Sazi, the Head of Department of English in Tagwinya High School, said:

*I think in a way leadership and management has contributed to school decline in schools. The leadership qualities of a school principal will generally affect the performance of the teachers and that of the students within the particular school. If within the school the leadership and management fails to enforce the school*



*policies and rules and regulations of the school and the ministry. This can definitely lead to school decline. (Mr Sazi)*

Mr Kukuru, a parent from Tagwinya High School, shared the same ideas of management being linked to school decline with the above participants when he said:

*Yes, I think there is a relationship between school decline and the school management. Where we have an efficient management there is high pass rate or good reputation whichever way you call it. Where we have management which is not efficient we have decline in all respects. In all functions of the school be it in class, sports or be it the physical appearance. (Mr Kukuru)*

In line with the above responses, a recent unpublished study by Mthiyane, Bhengu and Bayeni (date unknown) in South Africa notes that leadership fights lead to both school and pupil enrolment declining. This in turn leads to pupil absenteeism and late coming, teachers failing to report to duty and eventually to decline.

Viewed from Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) five stages model of organisational decline, the tensions present in stage three increase as the dominant coalition begins to fractionate, with subgroups positioning themselves to compete for declining resources (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989). In schools, members of staff start forming clicks and various departments start fighting for the declining school resources. Employees experience great uncertainty as rumours multiply and morale deteriorates (Greenhaigh, 1982). Some of the more talented may leave as they see opportunities for advancement and personal growth disappear. In schools, staff turnover of senior and more experienced and qualified personnel will increase looking for better schools within or outside the country. Members in boundary-spanning positions who believe that their calls for change have been ignored begin to consider other job possibilities. School leadership is questioned, and individual leaders are subjected to increasing stress (Weitzel & Jonsson, 1989).

Kanter (2004) also notes that in declining organisations, competition among individuals, cliques or departments can easily make some people feel deprived relative to others. She also notes that growing inequality perpetuates decline when it is based on factors other than performance and seems to be unfair. Certainly in troubled organisations, managers are thought to play favourites, giving people privileges or promotions for reasons other than objective performance (ibid, 2004).

The willingness to settle for mediocrity burgeons for work groups in declining companies. People in business caught in a downward spiral are likely to report that others do not care about performing to the highest standards for their industry (Kanter, 2004).

In her theory, Kanter (2004) also notes that as problems mount, so does the likelihood that managers would retreat to their own turf and defend it against change. People tend to blame others, avoid one another, become less communicative and managers retreat to their own territory instead of thinking about the school as a whole (Kanter, 2004). Commands start flowing from the top. Tighter cost controls are greeted with cynicism, as people whisper that none of it mattered if the company collapsed. Some begin to do minimum, showing up at work only long enough to earn their end-of-year bonus; everyone assume that others would be leaving, so they said it was not worth getting to know them. However, characteristics of chronically-low performing schools, such as large class sizes, diminished faculty capacity and increased student violence, potentially manifest as the consequences of school decline rather than initiate or facilitate the process (Hochbein & Duke, 2011). All this shows how management contributes to the decline of schools as organisations.

The link between management and school decline was discussed as weak and autocratic management (not involving teachers in decision making) causing schools to decline. The participants supported this through their responses and also in support was literature. The two theoretical framework also concurred to this when Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) five stage model of organisational decline alluded that in stage three people tend to form coalitions and cliques to fight for resources and also the school positions leading to further decline of the school. In her theory, Kanter (2004) also notes that as problems mount, so does the likelihood that managers would retreat to their own turf and defend it against change. So, weak management and autocratic management causes school decline.

In contrast, Mr. Muvhuro, a parent of Umambo High School, had the opposite in mind on the link between school management and decline in school and he said:

*I would say management might come as victims of circumstances. There was a time when there was no other way management could have handled the situation in Zimbabwean schools especially during the economic hardships and the*

*political situations. Whether they liked it or not, management ended up labeled as inefficient. So there is no way we can divorce management from the problems that schools faced but I would consider them as victims of circumstances. I do not want to say management in general caused schools to decline but under the circumstances the Zimbabweans were leaving it was always like an implied thing that management was definite to be corrupt to survive so there is a link but it is an indirect link from my own point of view. (Mr Muvhuro)*

In support of the above, literature notes that some schools in Zimbabwe have shown signs of decline and this has been aggravated by the economic meltdown which started in 2006 up to 2010 (Tendi, 2009). By 2008 the Zimbabwean economy had undergone a veritable meltdown, with all indicators signifying a country in severe distress. Thus, the country's once-internationally envied health and education services sector were in tatters by 2008 (Mlambo & Raftopoulos, 2010). Worsening the inadequate quality of teaching is the non-existence of the bare minimum of teaching and learning materials required for schools to operate. There was a severe lack of funding from government for books, desks, chairs and for the adequate remuneration of teachers. This has adversely affected the quality of education in Zimbabwe (Tendi, 2009).

From the literature above it shows how the collapse of the economy affected the running and management of the educational sector of Zimbabwe which later translated into the decline of most schools. This collapse of the economy made people to blame most of the school management in the decline of most schools since this was beyond their control because the government could no longer avail funds to buy text books, furniture and also to renovate and build new buildings in most schools. So, most school managements were used as scapegoats of the government failure caused by the economic melt-down because for the smooth running of schools and effective learning and teaching to take place there should be financial resources to buy teaching and learning aids like text books, furniture and computers.

School decline in Zimbabwe cannot be entirely blamed on weak leadership and autocratic style of management. The above findings have shown that management can sometimes be used as scapegoats of school decline, but the major cause was the economic collapse of the Zimbabwean economy starting 2006 up to 2010.

### 5.3 Suggestions to arrest decline

Most of the participants seemed to suggest the following to arrest school decline: reorientation and direction of parents and the community on education; better salaries for teachers; improve teacher working conditions; resuscitating the economy; community involvement; good leadership and management; school-community relations; provision of resources; incentives; appointing administrators on merit and experience; promoting rural schools; allowing non-governmental organisations to fund infrastructure development; sponsoring sports; professional development and training of school management team members on finance and administration.

Mr Gushungo, the Head of Department of History in Umambo High School, suggested the following:

*Generally the first point of call is to remunerate teachers well and also instill discipline in our schools. Source funds for erecting fences especially in rural schools so that the learning process is not disturbed by outside people and pupils can concentrate in their school business. (Mr Gushungo)*

In addition, Mr Mbongoro, the Deputy Principal of the same school, had the following to say:

*Involve teachers in school development plans. Make some committees and let the teachers also be chairpersons or steering committee members of those particular activities and discuss with them whatever you want to do. Get ideas from them. Some of them have got brilliant ideas if you consult with them they will tell you what is the best way forward. If you do not consult with them you will be doing it at your own risk. The school management and leadership should consult teachers they must be team work to form synergies. (Mr Mbongoro)*

Furthermore, Mr Sazi, the Head of Department of Tagwinya High School, notes that:

*As far as the provision of resources is concerned (Monetary and material resources), they should be provided by the government. Also on the question of staff development they need to be some mechanisms to make sure that some of the administrators go for in-service training. Bringing together all the stakeholders of the school to ensure the smooth running of the schools. They should be*

*cooperation from parents, government and other corporate bodies that can help with resources we are talking about (text books, computers, teaching and learning materials like chalk and charts and furniture). (Mr Sazi)*

Similarly, Mrs Chitate, the Deputy Principal of Tagwinya High School, had the following to say:

*In our situation in Zimbabwe if teachers are remunerated properly this school decline we are talking about will be arrested if we are referring to academic excellence per say. Even students would be motivated to come to school because teachers are role models not only in schools but even out there in the society.*  
(Mrs Chitate)

In turning around declining organisations leaders should shift the cycle away from the sins of losers to restore accountability, collaboration and initiatives since they are the three cornerstones of confidence which is essential in turning around organisations (Kanter, 2004). Mthiyane, *et al.* (date unknown) suggest the following possible solutions for school decline; a continuous development programmes for both school leaders and teachers, running of schools as businesses, democratic leadership, teamwork, empowerment of principals with teachers' unions and balance between pupils' rights and responsibilities. Also noted was the proper implementation of education department policies, effective support from Education Department officials, improved parental involvement and restoration of the culture of teaching and learning.

The following are strategies to be considered to help declining schools and students improve: strengthen and support school leadership; stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning; attract, support and retain high quality teachers; ensure effective classroom learning strategies and prioritise linking schools with parents and communities (OCED, 2012). One recommendation for managing decline in schools is to borrow strategic management techniques from the private sector (Kotler & Murphy, 1981). These techniques typically emphasise the role of external environmental conditions, and the advantage of this approach for schools is that it does encourage administrators to look beyond internal events to monitor external events and to examine the relationships among external and internal events.

Schendel, Patton and Riggs (1976) referred to the three most frequently cited cures for reversing decline: the introduction of new leadership, diversification through product development and

acquisition, and divestment of failing lines and divisions. Even if an effective reorientation plan is achieved, the third stage of decline still may not be reversed unless the plan is successfully implemented. There are many obstacles to decision implementation, as the extensive literature on change suggests. In schools, new and competent leadership can be introduced, including the new subjects, removing subjects that are obsolete due to insufficient resources and equipment and looking for expert teachers in problem subjects.

Replacement of top administrators is usually required to bring in new ideas and eliminate ingrown cognitive biases and old consensus in the school (Hedberg, *et. al.*, 1976; Levine, 1979; Tushman, *et. al.*, 1986). The act of replacing groups of top managers has the additional benefit of serving as a symbol of the need for major change and provides “scapegoats” to relieve tension. Gradual replacement will not work, because new persons introduced in this way tend to succumb to the cohesiveness of the former management group. Time constraints are the most important reason for more rapid changes.

In support of the above, Kanter (2004) states that it is possible to slide into a cycle of decline without even knowing it until the pattern of losing or failure becomes visible to everyone (Kanter, 2004). The symptoms get harder to ignore, the underlying weaknesses harder to deny. Time and excuses begin to run out, momentum and appearance begin to run down. Now a deliberate choice needs to be made: whether to let decline turn into death, or to try to restore health (Kanter, 2004). This shows that declining organisations or schools have options whether to close or try to turnaround the school into an improving school from a declining school. This should be done by the management finding ways of arresting school decline and improving schools.

According to Kanter (2004), big visions are just words, but the equipment and decor are in sight every minute and make a difference in carrying out tasks every day. She cites that what matters in restoring individual confidence is not the source of the new investment but the fact that new leaders are willing and able to invest in people and their work environment. Turnaround starts with an injection of new investment (Kanter, 2004). This highlights the importance of funds to buy resources and renovate school to restore confidence amongst teachers, pupils, parents and the community.

A winning streak requires renewal and rebuilding. In the schools fresh blood (new qualified and innovative staff) is required to bring new ideas especially in the management phase so that the schools can reorient their school vision and mission to the current educational trends. As momentum runs down, people and buildings begin to look run down (Kanter, 2004).

A positive emotional climate of high expectations reinforces self-confidence. Winners' behaviours and attitudes – including abundant communication, thorough preparation using detailed metrics, mutual respect and deep knowledge of one another's strengths, the desire to work together and help one another succeed and empowering environment of shared leadership - reinforce confidence in one another. Organisational culture and routines supporting accountability, collaboration and initiative reinforces confidence in the system. Strong networks providing encouragement, resources and information reinforce external confidence (Kanter, 2004). In schools which are high achieving in academics they exhibit winners' behaviours and attitudes including abundant communication, through preparations using detailed metrics, mutual respect and deep knowledge of one another's strengths, the desire to work together and help one another succeed and empowering environment of shared leadership – reinforce confidence in one another. All is done to ensure that the high academic achievement is maintained.

From the observations I made to arrest school decline, the government should avail funds to schools to renovate the classrooms, build more classrooms, build laboratories and better staff houses with running water and electricity to motivate and retain qualified teachers especially in rural schools.

#### **5.4 School choice**

The findings from the participants suggest that most of them seemed to understand school choice as the ability, freedom of choice, willingness, attraction, reasons, appetite of choosing a specific school by both parents and learners amongst the various schools a nation has in terms of government, day schools, boarding schools, private schools and church related schools.

Mr Gushungo, the Head of Department of History from Umambo High School, said:

*School choice is the option made by a person between or amongst schools where to go to maybe to learn or to go to work. There are some factors that can affect*

*school choice like the pass rate of the school and the financial consideration of the amount of fees charged at the school. Even the distance that is involved from home to the school also affects the choice of the school. (Mr Gushungo)*

In addition, Mrs Chirandu, the Head of Department of History in Tagwinya High School, also understood school choice as:

*School choice is the selection of a school amongst others by interested stakeholders (parents or students). There are factors that can affect school choice like distance; most of the schools here are day schools so parents consider distance from their home areas. They also focus on the schools which have the fees or tuitions that they can afford. At times they also consider the type of the curriculum offered at the school then try and foster what they would want their children to be. Some parents would move their children from schools that concentrate on Arts subjects then they feel Science and Commercial subjects are more profitable these days. So subject choice also affects school choice. (Mrs Chirandu)*

Furthermore, Mrs Chitate, the Deputy Principal of the same school, said:

*This one is multi-faceted; school choice may mean the opportunity to choose a school where one would want to attain their educational career. School choice also means that choice one makes on grade A schools the private schools, grade B which are government, council schools, boarding school or church schools when choosing a school to attain their education. (Mrs Chitate)*

In agreement, Mr Chipiri, a parent from Umambo High School, shared the same sentiments of school choice as the above participants:

*School choice is the ability of a parent to choose amongst the variety of schools that are there in a country to choose which one to send his/her child to. There are limitations to one's choice. The most important thing that determines school choice is affordability. In our area there are some schools that require more or high fees as compared to others. So your choice will be affected by your pocket*



*because you cannot send your child to a certain school because of the fees they charge. (Mr Chipiri)*

Also, Mrs Nzira, a parent from the Tagwinya High School, highlighted the following:

*School choice is whereby a parent or a child prefers a school over another because of reasons especially considering pass rates, infrastructure, quality of education that determine school choice. (Mrs Nzira)*

Public schools have played and will continue to play the key role in ensuring that all Zimbabwean learners have access to schooling. According to Ilon (1992), Zimbabwe is a country where a variety of schooling options exist, “choice” actually exist. There are “independent” schools or “high fee-paying” schools. In addition, Ilon (1992) notes that more accessible to the general population are the mission schools. After independence, Zimbabwe integrated former white and former black government schools into one system. Such schools were formerly grouped by group “A” schools and group “B” schools - white schools and black schools respectively. The above shows the variety of options available to Zimbabwean parents from private schools, government schools and mission schools.

Furthermore, according to Ilon (1992), poor parents do not face a “menu of options” and have little choice but to send their children to the local, poorer quality, community or government school. Little doubt, they would choose the higher-quality private school if it were a *bona fide* option. Over the last couple of decades society, including the society of Zimbabwe has placed more and more emphasis on the academic achievement of its citizens. This shows that school choice is as limited by the financial backgrounds of parents.

In support of school choice, Kanter (2004) notes that success means that people or teams or organisations survive long enough to need maintenances and repairs – in other words, re-investment. Winners undergo natural aging processes as people get older, slow down, leave. Their facilities, tools and bags of tricks get older, deteriorate, run-down. Winners also face natural limits – the organisational equivalent of “shelf-life” and “shelf-space” (Kanter, 2004, p.73). This shows that if high performing schools like School A want to maintain its first choice with students and parents it has to re-invest through improving school infrastructure like

classrooms, teachers houses to retain the best teaching staff and laboratories for both computers and science subjects which will be well-equipped.

According to Kanter (2004), some winners' advantage reach limits, as all seats in the stadium are filled or as product markets become saturated. It is also hard to win forever because of the paradox of success. Success creates its own problems that make it hard to sustain. Even without regulation reducing winners' advantages, winners often face circumstances in which their competition gets tougher. She notes that success also produces its own competition. Innovators have the field to themselves until others catch on, jump in, or change the way they play. Success creates attractive markets, encourages imitations and brings out the toughest competitions (*ibid*, 2004). This is true in schools it is very hard for schools to remain achieving high academic achievement due to various reasons like change of leadership and management, staff loss due to death, retirement or transfers to other schools, change of the curriculum and change in the quality of learners each year.

From the observations made, a school like Umambo High School can be a school of choice for most Zimbabwean parents. The school looked up to date in terms of all the things I have mentioned. The school infrastructure looked well-maintained, school furniture was available to all students and computers and the internet was available which shows technological advancement on part of the school since computers and the internet are essentials for modern teaching and learning to be effective. The inclusion of sports like basketball shows improvement in the sporting part not only offering the traditional sports like soccer and netball. The school has overall been performing well shown by the latest shield it scooped for the best A level results in the district. The school also offers a wide curriculum for their A level which includes Science subjects like Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics; Commercial subjects like the Management of Business, Accounting and Economics; Arts subjects like Geography, Divinity, Shona and Literature. The school is definitely a school of choice for many parents in the district, many students would wish to enroll there for their advanced level.

School choice is the ability and freedom of both parents and pupils to choose a school amongst schools in a country to obtain their educational needs depending on the factors they consider such as pass rates, facilities, subjects offered and the nature of the school and affordability. This is supported by literature and the participants' responses. Also, Kanter's (2004) theory supports

choice when she notes people want to be associated with successful schools so the high academic performing schools are a choice of many and as for declining schools, people are running away from them. The observations made also supports this when it is shown that parents and pupils prefer a school of choice to have good infrastructure and well maintained buildings and classrooms.

### **5.5 School decline, school choice and learner migration**

Most of the participants suggested that there was a link amongst the three phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration. They stated that if the school is in decline, this directly influences the parents to choose or not to choose the school. Ultimately this has a bearing on learner migration away from such a school. The following participants, in support of this finding, said:

Mr Mbongoro, the Deputy Principal of Umambo High School, had the following to say:

*Yes there is a relationship amongst school decline, school choice and learner migration. If the school is declining definitely no parent or student would want to enroll in such a school that is declining in terms of pass rates and infrastructure. So if it is declining, the school choice also declines. The school will be shunned by both parents and students. Now student migration. It means if the school has declined we have more transfer out than transferring in. A lot of people would migrate out going away from that school. Actually there is a link amongst these three school decline, school choice and learner migration. (Mr Mbongoro)*

Also, sharing the same opinion is Mr Gushungo, the Head of Department of the same school, said:

*There might be a relationship among school decline, school choice and learner migration. If a school is declining, the students would move out because when the school is declining that message of decline also goes around to parents because parents are investing in their children. Most parents would not be comfortable to let their children study at the declining school leading to them transferring them*

*to a better performing school leading to learner migration from one school to another. (Mr Gushungo)*

From Tagwinya High School, Mrs Chirandu, a Head of Department, said:

*Yes there is a relationship among school decline, school choice and learner migration. You would find out that when a school is not performing well or declining goals are not being met or achieved you would find that school would not become a choice to parents who will be aware of the situation of that situation. (Mrs Chirandu)*

In support of the above, a parent from Umambo High School, Mr Chipiri, said:

*Once the school has declined its performance, pass rates and infrastructure parents shun that school. Once the school declines, the standards of the school will begin to decline and also its enrolment of both teachers and learners. So there is a strong link between the two school decline and school choice. Learners will be migrating from one school to another considering the idea of pass rates, infrastructure, and good behaviour provided by the other schools which will be lacking at the current school or the schools they are migrating from. So it is interlinked to the idea of declining of a school and the choice the parents have and the movement of pupils from one school to another. (Mr Chipiri)*

In addition, at Tagwinya High School, a parent, Mr Ndira, said:

*Yes there is a link. If the school is producing poor results the children are likely to move from that school to another better performing school. If it happens that the school is deteriorating in results or the standards of teaching and learning conduciveness that school is likely to face learner migration. The parents can now make a choice because this one is having better results, let me move my children from this school to that one. The parent is going to make a choice and that choice is going to lead to migration because some certain standards that have deteriorated. (Mr Ndira)*

Literature has the following to support the link amongst school decline, school choice and learner migration identified by the participants. Gorard, Taylor and Fitz (2002) consider the notion of schools in a spiral of decline, in which less popular schools within a market system lose numbers and increase their proportion of socially disadvantaged pupils over time. In an era of raw-score performance indicators such a decline could quickly become a spiral, with disadvantage leading to poorer aggregated results, leading to less popularity and so on. This is true and in line with what the participants said. When a school is in decline its enrolment is also in decline with parents transferring their children to better performing schools and that is what the literature is noting.

In addition, Bernstein (2012) notes that public schools need greater freedom to respond to competition from other schools. Similarly, Baird (2009) notes that Low-Fee Private schools are highly responsive to parents' demands for quality education, and are often very good at producing decent results with limited resources. This is also noted in the participants responses when they highlighted that public school are becoming less of importance in choice of parents than private schools due to their poor performance and also because they pay less than private schools they are also losing their best teaching staff to private school.

In order to improve their children's pass rates, some parents in Zimbabwe have resorted to sending their children to higher-achieving schools, most of which are expensive, with some charging as much as US\$600 to US\$1 000 per term (Gordon, 1995). The sentiments expressed above underline the importance parents attach to high academic achievement. This shows that parents are willing to sacrifice their money choosing a well-performing school than sending their children to declining schools.

The observations made also showed that Umambo High School looked up to date in terms of all the things that parents consider when choosing a school for their children. The school infrastructure looked well maintained, school furniture was available to all students and computers and the internet was available which shows technological advancement on part of the school since computers and the internet are essentials for modern teaching and learning to be effective. The inclusion of sports like basketball shows improvement in the sporting part not only offering the traditional sports like soccer and net ball. The school has overall been performing well shown by the latest shields it scooped for the best A level results in the district. The school

also offers a wide curriculum for their A level which includes Science subjects like Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physics; Commercial subjects like the Management of Business, Accounting and Economics; Arts subjects like Geography, Divinity, Shona and Literature. The school is definitely a school of choice to many parents in the district many students would wish to enroll there for their advanced level. More learners are likely to migrate in to that school than migrate out and the opposite is true for Tagwinya High School, due to its declining state it will lose more learners to Umambo High School. Pupils and parents will be choosing Umambo High School over Tagwinya High School, leading to high learner migration between the two being caused by school decline.

The link amongst the three phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration was shown by the participants in their responses when they noted that a school in decline will lose the preferential choice of both parents and learners leading to learner migration to better performing schools. This is also supported by literature that schools which are high academic performers attract more learners from declining school leading to declining schools decreasing in learner enrolment and learner population. From the observations made, pupils from Tagwinya High School are migrating out of the school due to its decline to Umambo high school.

## **5.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the findings that emerged through data analysis of what the participants responded to the research question which were simplified through the interview questions. The findings also emerged from the observations made and the documents that were reviewed from both schools. Literature reviewed and the two theoretical frameworks (Weitzel and Jonsson, 1989, five stages model of organisational decline and Kanter, 2004) were used to support the themes that emerged from the respondents when they answered the research questions. The following Chapter Six is the conclusions and implications of the study. The emerging findings informed the study conclusions and implications.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented and discussed the findings that emerged from the data analysed. This chapter outlines the summary of the entire study; the conclusions that are informed by the findings from the previous chapter; the recommendations and implications for further study. A chapter summary concludes the chapter.

#### **6.2 Summary of the study**

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study, the background, purpose and rationale to the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and explanation of the key concepts. The literature review, theoretical frameworks, research design and methodology, delimitation and the limitations were also stated. Thus, it gave an overview of what was expected in subsequent chapters, which is how the study was structured.

Chapter Two focused on what international, continental and Zimbabwean literature reveals on the phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration.

Chapter Three outlined the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline theory and Kanter's (2004) organisational decline theory.

Chapter Four discussed the research design and methodology where the sampling procedures, data generation and analysis were elaborated on. The chapter further discussed the trustworthiness and triangulation of data, ethical considerations and the limitations to the study.

Chapter Five was on the presentation of the data generated through semi-structured interviews, observations and documents reviewed. The key research questions, the literature reviewed and the adopted theoretical frameworks were utilised to analyse, bringing order, structure and

meaning to the mass of generated data. Findings, based on this analysis, led to particular themes, inferences and deductions.

Chapter Six was the final chapter. It gave a summary of the whole study, drew conclusions based on the research findings and made recommendations and implications for further research.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

The findings that emerged through data analysed led to the following conclusions:

School decline in Zimbabwe is the deterioration of school building and infrastructure, standards dropping in terms of teaching and learning, the general decline of the value of education, decline in terms of the values and attitudes of children towards education, poor performance of students in public examinations, decrease in the quality of the teaching staff as well as decline in pupil enrolment. It can also be concluded that decline is not an event but rather a process over a long period of time.

The major causes of Zimbabwean schools to decline are socio-economic conditions, the poor economy of Zimbabwe and politics both (national and local/school politics), lack of funding and resources towards education and incentives for teachers, the departure of qualified and experienced teachers to neighbouring countries, low teacher morale, the poor attitude of students to learning and the emerging of children's rights.

It is concluded that weak and autocratic management (not involving teachers in decision making) causes schools to decline. In contrast, it is also shown that management can be used as scapegoat in school decline due to the poor state of the economy which has led to the collapse of the educational sector as a whole affecting most schools.

Suggestions to arrest decline in schools include re-orientation and direction of parents and the community on education, better salaries for teachers and improving teacher working conditions, resuscitating the economy and availing resources to the educational sector, community involvement especially parents in managing the schools; good leadership and management; school-community relations; provision of resources; incentives, appointing administrators on



merit and experience, promoting rural school schools, allowing non-governmental organisations to fund infrastructure development and sponsor sports, professional development and training of school management team members on finance and administration.

School choice is the ability and freedom of both parents and pupils to choose a school amongst schools in a country, to obtain their educational needs depending on the factors they consider such as pass rates, educational facilities, subjects and sporting activities offered, the nature of the school (boarding or day school) and affordability.

The study has also shown that there is a strong link amongst the three phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration. When a school is declining it is most likely that parents and learners will not choose it and most pupils will migrate from the declining school to better performing schools. Learner migration is caused by learners moving out of declining school through choice to better performing schools.

## **6.4 Recommendations for the study**

Informed by the findings from the previous chapter and the above conclusions, the following are the recommendations and implications for further study:

### **6.4.1 Turning around decline in schools**

Schools can turnaround decline by maintaining and improving higher student pass rates by encouraging a positive culture of teaching and learning in schools; renovating and maintaining school buildings, properties and sporting facilities using the school funds, money from fund raising functions and well-wishers from the business corporate world or the community. It is also recommended that schools should build new infrastructure and improve their schools to retain staff and increase enrolments due to the availability of resources and facilities for effective teaching and learning to take place leading to better improved results and school improvement, the opposite of school decline.

#### **6.4.2 Minimising the causes of decline**

It is acknowledged that the Zimbabwean economy needs to be resuscitated so that the government can adequately support the educational sector through availing financial resources to buy textbooks, furniture, improve infrastructure (libraries, laboratories, computers and computer laboratories) and introduce new subjects in the curriculum. Since the economy is an external factor which schools have minimum control over, it is recommended that schools should have proper visionary leadership and management when it comes to the management of funds such that they can also as countries have reserves of funds for situations like the economy meltdown in future. The impact of school decline was small on those schools that had some extra funds set aside which they used to cushion the low salaries of their teachers through incentives and improve the school infrastructure and staff housing conditions to retain the most competent staff which led to the maintaining of high pass rates. It is also recommended that the government of any nation should improve the teacher working conditions, starting with adequately compensating their work through a decent salary and staff accommodation as to retain the experienced and most qualified from migrating to neighbouring countries and attracting back those who have already left the country to minimise brain drain which leads to further school decline. Teachers are also supposed to be protected by the government in order to have the freedom to choose political parties without being victimised and politics should be dealt with separately from education at a national and local school level because politics has been shown as a major contributor of school decline.

#### **6.4.3 Improving leadership and management in schools**

Teachers are supposed to be consulted in decision making in areas of their expertise to improve the quality of decisions made in schools. Also, if teachers participate in decision-making, it improves their morale and implementation of the decisions which is good for academic results production. School leaders are supposed to be more democratic, open to suggestions and take refresher or in-service courses to improve the way they lead and manage schools. Principals should also be appointed on merit and experience to arrest school decline through inefficient leadership and management of schools.

#### **6.4.4 The role of the government**

The government and schools should emphasise the importance of education to resuscitate the value of education to both students and the community. The government should avail more funds to the education sector to improve schools, teacher salaries and working conditions. The availability of funds will also facilitate the building of important facilities like laboratories and libraries which will improve teaching and learning. The government should also subsidise education especially in rural areas to make it affordable to the poor and support rural schools to retain qualified teachers by putting electricity and running water to improve the working conditions.

#### **6.4.5 Becoming a school of choice**

Schools should continuously improve on infrastructure; pass rates; subjects offered and sports to meet the current needs of the learners and parents. In so doing they will remain the first choice of most learners and parents and schools that are in decline should do the above to improve and also become the first choice of the learners and parents to counteract learner and teacher migration to other better performing schools.

#### **6.4.6 School influence on the three phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration**

For declining schools to retain both teachers and pupils from migrating to better schools and to regain their first choice preference from both pupils and parents, they need to improve on their academic pass rates, widen their curriculum by introducing new subjects for example the science subjects, practicals and computers as a subject, widening the sporting activities to attract a new range of learners (tennis, cricket, basketball, hockey), maintaining and improving schools buildings and good housing for their staff members for motivation and high morale.

#### **6.5 Implications for further study**

This study utilised a qualitative approach to understand the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe using a case study of two schools in one district. It must be

noted that this does not give a strong generalised view on the three phenomena. As revealed by the findings of the research, school decline influences parents and pupils alike to choose better performing schools over declining schools leading to learner migration. So to say this study is a generalised view on the above is not authentic considering the sample size (two schools out of more than 2000 schools in Zimbabwe) and sample population (20 participants). Therefore, there is a need for a larger study to be conducted using different methodologies and methods in order to get a better picture of the phenomena under study. A comparative study of the three phenomena can be done across districts and provinces and an increased sample size, sample population and time framework (years) to come to a conclusive agreement amongst the three.

In addition, to better understand the causes of decline in schools is to increase in the sample size and population, and time framework of the study (studying the schools over a period of years) this can lead to better conclusions on the actual causes of schools to decline, school choice and learner migration in Zimbabwe. Comparative studies can also be included to identify if school decline, choice and learner migration are caused by the same factors across the districts, provinces and nations.

Furthermore, a comparative study of the same study can be done in countries where the economy is efficient so that a better conclusion can be made whether leadership and management contributes to school decline, choice and learner migration since the poor economic issue was raised to contribute to people scapegoating leadership and management in Zimbabwean schools.

Availing possible solutions to school decline is important since school decline is a reality in most countries across the globe. An important implication is that more studies should be done across the globe on schools that have successfully turned around decline so that more possible practical and realistic suggestions will be availed to declining schools to improve and regain their former glory and pride.

School choice is a complex phenomenon as concluded in the study since participants had various meanings and factors affecting it. A larger sample size and population and coverage across different districts and provinces could lead to more possible meanings and reasons to school choice and learner migration in a country. Also a comparative study can be done across districts and provinces to find out if the participants understand school choice in the same manner.

## **6.6 Chapter summary**

The chapter gave an entire study summary in terms of what each chapter entailed. The findings from the previous chapter informed the conclusions which led to the recommendations and the implications for further study on the three phenomena of school decline, school choice and learner migration.

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## **APPENDIX: A**



## APPENDIX: B

### PERMISSION LETTER TO THE ZIMBABWEAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS, ARTS AND CULTURE CHIPINGE DISTRICT.

Nyamuzara Motors  
Private Bag 300  
Checheche  
23 September 2013

Attention: The District Educational Officer  
Private Box 175  
Chipinge

Dear Madam

#### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Mr. Freedom Chiororo a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in South Africa. I am conducting research on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. I therefore kindly seek permission to conduct research in the following High Schools under your jurisdiction. The schools are: High School and High School.

The title of my research project is: **School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

This study aims to explore the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in the two selected High Schools in Chipinge District and will focus on current school principals, deputy principals and head of departments and some parents of both schools. The study will use semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time convenient to them and all will be asked for their consent to be voice-recorded.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and pseudonyms will be used instead of the actual names. Participants will be contacted well in advance for interviews and they would have been purposively selected to participate in this study. Participants will always remain voluntary which means that participants may withdraw from the study for any reason, anytime if they so wish without incurring any penalties.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr. Freedom Chiororo; Cell 0774 797 054; E-mail: [freedomchiororo@gmail.com](mailto:freedomchiororo@gmail.com); or my supervisor Mr. S.E. Mthiyane; Tel: +2731 260 1870; Email: [Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za); Cell +2773 377 4672.

Or

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 260 3587, and E-mail: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za))

Research tools are attached herewith for your perusal.

Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. F. Chiororo

.....

## **APPENDIX: C**



## APPENDIX: D

### REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Nyamuzara Motors  
Private Bag 300  
Checheche

23 September 2013

Attention: The Principal  
High School  
Private Bag 90  
Chipinge

Dear Sir\Madam

### REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Mr. Freedom Chiororo a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in South Africa. As part of my study, I am conducting research on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. I'm kindly requesting you, some members of your school management team and some parents to be part of my project. Please be informed that, I'm seeking the necessary permission from the Chipinge District Educational Office to conduct this research in your school and I'm still waiting for their response (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: **School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

This study aims to explore the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in the two selected High Schools (which are named in the Chipinge District Educational Office permission letter) and will focus on school principals (current), deputy principals, head of

departments and some parents to solicit their views on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. The study will use semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time and place convenient to them and all will be asked for their consent to be voice-recorded.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:**

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/ penalty on your part. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist us in concentrating on the actual interview. Participants will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr. Freedom Chiororo; Cell 0774 797 054; E-mail: [freedomchiororo@gmail.com](mailto:freedomchiororo@gmail.com); or my supervisor Mr. S.E. Mthiyane; Tel: +2731 260 1870; Email: [Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za); Cell +2773 377 4672.

Or

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 260 3587, and E-mail: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za))

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.  
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance  
Yours sincerely

Mr. F. Chiororo  
.....

## **APPENDIX: E**





**APPENDIX: F**  
**Declaration/Consent form**

I ..... (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:  
**School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project anytime should I so desire. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being recorded.

Signature of Participant: ..... Date: .....

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: ..... Date: .....

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

Mr Freedom Chiororo

.....

## APPENDIX: G

### REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Nyamuzara Motors  
Private Bag 300  
Checheche  
23 September 2013

Attention: The Principal  
High School  
Private Bag 197  
Chipinge

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Mr. Freedom Chiororo a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in South Africa. As part of my study, I am conducting research on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. I'm kindly requesting you, some members of your school management team and some parents to be part of this project. Please be informed that, I'm seeking the necessary permission from the Chipinge District Educational Office to conduct this research in your school and I'm still waiting for their response (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: **School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

This study aims to explore the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in the two High Schools (which are named in the Chipinge District Educational Office permission letter) and will focus on school principals (current), deputy principals, head of departments and some parents to solicit their views on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner

migration. The study will use semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to collect data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time and place convenient to them and consent will be sought from them to voice record them.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:**

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/ penalty on your part. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist us in concentrating on the actual interview. Participants will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr. Freedom Chiororo; Cell 0774 797 054; E-mail: [freedomchiororo@gmail.com](mailto:freedomchiororo@gmail.com); or my supervisor Mr. S.E. Mthiyane; Tel: +2731 260 1870; Email: [Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za); Cell +2773 377 4672.

Or

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 260 3587, and E-mail: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za))

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal. Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. F. Chiororo

## APPENDIX: H

### REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Nyamuzara Motors  
Private Bag 300  
Checheche  
23 September 2013

Attention: The Principal  
High School  
Private Bag 197  
Chipinge

Dear Sir

### REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Mr. Freedom Chiororo a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in South Africa. As part of my study, I am conducting research on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. I'm kindly requesting you, some members of your school management team and some parents to be part of this project. Please be informed that, I'm seeking the necessary permission from the Chipinge District Educational Office to conduct this research in your school and I'm still waiting for their response (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: **School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

This study aims to explore the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in the two selected High Schools (which are named in the Chipinge District Educational Office permission letter) and will focus on school principals (current), deputy principals, head of

departments and some parents to solicit their views on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. The study will use semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at the time and place convenient to them and consent will be sought from them to voice record them.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:**

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/ penalty on your part. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist us in concentrating on the actual interview. Participants will be contacted in time about the interviews.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr. Freedom Chiororo; Cell 0774 797 054; E-mail: [freedomchiororo@gmail.com](mailto:freedomchiororo@gmail.com); or my supervisor Mr. S.E. Mthiyane; Tel: +2731 260 1870; Email: [Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za); Cell +2773 377 4672.

Or

The HSSREC Research Office (Ms P. Ximba, Tel. 031 260 3587, and E-mail: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za))

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal. Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. F. Chiororo

**APPENDIX: I**

**Declaration/Consent form**

I ..... (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:  
**School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project anytime should I so desire. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being recorded.

Signature of Participant: ..... Date: .....

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: ..... Date: .....

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

Mr Freedom Chiororo

.....

## APPENDIX: J

### REQUEST FOR YOU TO BE A PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Nyamuzara Motors  
Private Bag 300  
Checheche

23 September 2013

**Attention:** Parents

Dear Sir\Madam

#### REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am Mr. Freedom Chiororo a student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) in South Africa. As part of my study, I am conducting research on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. I'm kindly requesting for you as a parent of one of the two schools I'm researching on to take part in my research by providing your views on the phenomena I have mentioned above. Please be informed that, I'm seeking the necessary permission from the Chipinge District Educational Office to conduct this research in schools and I'm still waiting for their response (See copy attached).

The title of my research project is: **School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

This study aims to explore the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration in the two selected High Schools (which are named in the Chipinge District Educational Office permission letter) and will focus on school principals (current), deputy principals, head of departments and some parents to solicit their views on the phenomena of school decline, choice and learner migration. The study will use semi-structured interviews, observations and documents review to generate data. Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40

minutes at the time and place convenient to them.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT:**

There will be no financial benefits that participants may accrue as a result of their participation in this research project.

Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances, during and after the reporting process. All your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. Fictitious names will be used to represent your names. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you are free to withdraw at any time you so wish without incurring any negative or undesirable consequences/ penalty on your part. The interviews shall be voice-recorded to assist us in concentrating on the actual interview. Participants will be contacted in time about the interviews and consent will be sought from them to voice record them.

For further information on this research project, please feel free to contact me using the following contact details: Mr. Freedom Chiororo; Cell 0774 797 054; E-mail: freedomchiororo@gmail.com; or my supervisor Mr. S.E. Mthiyane; Tel: +2731 260 1870; Email: Mthiyanes@ukzn.ac.za; Cell +2773 377 4672.

The interview schedule is attached herewith for your perusal.  
Your anticipated positive response in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Mr. F. Chiororo

.....



**APPENDIX: K**

**Declaration/Consent form**

I ..... (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, purpose and procedures for the study:  
**School decline and choice in Zimbabwe: A case of two schools in the Chipinge District.**

I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent voluntarily to take part in the study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project anytime should I so desire. Finally, I consent/ do not consent to this interview being recorded.

Signature of Participant: ..... Date: .....

Signature of Witness/ Research Assistant: ..... Date: .....

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

Mr Freedom Chiororo

.....



**APPENDIX: M**

**Interview schedule/guide with school principals, deputy principals of the school and the heads of department.**

**Section A: School decline questions:**

- 1) What is your understanding of school decline?
- 2) What do you think has caused schools that were once reputed for high levels of academic performance to decline?

.....  
.....

- 3) What are the major indicators of school decline?

.....  
.....

- 4) Do you think that leadership and management within the schools have contributed to school decline? **Yes or No**

- a) If your answer is ‘Yes’, please explain why you think that leadership and management within the schools have not contributed to school decline.

.....  
.....

- 5) What do you suggest should be done to arrest school decline? Please elaborate.

.....

**Section B: School choice question**

- 6) What is your understanding of school choice?

- 7) Parents have certain qualities and factors that they consider when choosing a school for their children can you identify them?

.....  
.....  
8) What can schools do to retain their pupils and to become first choice schools when parents are choosing the schools for their children? Please elaborate.

.....  
.....

**Section C: Learner migration questions**

9) Has your school enrolment increased or decline?

10) If yes or no give reasons

.....  
.....

11) How has been the transfer rate of students?

12) Give possible reasons of students transferring or migrating to other schools?

.....

13) Before we conclude this conversation, is there anything that you want me to know which I have not asked, please tell me.

.....  
.....

**Thank you very much for your inputs and the time you have spent talking to me.**

**APPENDIX: N**

**Interview schedule/guide with parents of the learners**

**Section A: Biographical details**

**Title .....**

**Gender            Male**

**Female**

**Number of children at the current school: .....**

**Highest education qualification: .....**

**Section B: School decline**

- 1) What is your understanding of school decline?
- 2) What are the indicators that a school has declined?
- 3) What do you think has contributed to the decline of once reputed good schools?
- 4) Do you think there is a link between school management and school decline?

**Section B: School choice**

- 5) What do you understand by school choice?
- 6) Can you list the factors that you consider when choosing a school for your children  
.....
- 7) Why do you think parents prefer to send their children to private schools over historically black schools?

- 8) How can historically black schools improve to retain students and become first choice of parents when it comes to educating their children?

**Section C: Learner migration questions**

- 9) What makes parents to transfer their children from one school to another?

.....

- 10) Do you think there is a link between school decline, school choice and learner migration?

- 11) Before we conclude this conversation, is there anything that you want me to know about school decline, school choice and learner migration which I have not asked, please tell me.

.....

**Thank you very much for your inputs and time you have spent talking to me.**

## **APPENDIX: O**

### **Observation schedule.**

- 1) School buildings (classrooms and staff housings).
- 2) School facilities (grounds).
- 3) Pupil's general behaviour, uniforms, school pride and blazers.
- 4) School properties (School furniture and Laboratories).
- 5) General environments (flowers and fish ponds).
- 6) Library (books and computers).
- 7) Respect to visitors.

## **APPENDIX: P**

### **Document review schedule for the past 7 years**

- 1) Review of school enrolment figures
- 2) Review of transfer figures of students to and from the school
- 3) Review of the school pass rates
- 4) Review of staff turn over



## **APPENDIX: Q**