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Title: Class repetition

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CLASS REPETITION: THE EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF REPEATING A CLASS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN TANZANIA.

OLIVER MUGIZI KISHEBUKA

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Social Science in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, School for Policy Studies. May 2018.

Forty-Five thousand, two hundred and twenty-one words
Abstract

Education is one of the dimensional indices used to calculate Human development. In the last 10 years the quality of education in Tanzania has rendered a large number of children finishing basic primary education unable to read or and in some cases being required to repeat a class. In Tanzania class repetition is considered to be a strategy that assists literacy in children by availing them another opportunity to participate in lessons and re-sit examinations for the failed year. The concept is contested in other parts of the world where studies suggest that withholding children has negative consequences on children’s future academic and socio-emotional outcomes thus further affecting educational performance.

This study looked at the experience of young people of repeating a class in a society where education is given great emphasis as means of social mobility. It looked at the experience of the young people in Tanzania, in the context of the various systems surrounding them and interacting with them (both directly and indirectly) such as their families, schools, neighbourhoods, communities, education policies and laws; and how such systems either fostered or hindered their resilience when repeating a class. Using responses from young people who were this study’s key informants and comparative approaches based on resilience and ecological framework, the study highlights how the process of decision making impacted and influenced the perception of young people of repeating a class as well as influenced these young people’s overall experience of repeating a class. Young people’s participation and consultation in the process of decision making was given great significance and as such, a model has been developed to emphasize children’s voices, approaches and interventions that are child-centred.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Giane and Jethro, and to my family. You guys are the best. Your support has seen me through a lot. I couldn’t have asked for a better loving and supportive family.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank each and every one that has helped and supported me throughout my learning journey.

I would especially like to thank my children who at a very tender age understood mummy was busy and stressed with University work, and have been very patient, understanding and always prayed for me to do well. I would also like to thank my husband for his support and encouragement especially in the early days of my studies when I was struggling to balance University work with family life.

I would also like to thank my parents and siblings for their unwavering and unconditional support; emotionally, morally, practically and through their prayers that helped to see me through most of the toughest times.

Special thanks to friends and extended family; Faith Cabrera for helping with school runs when I was in Tanzania collecting data and whenever I needed help with childcare; Dr Fredrick Longino and Dr Flora Tibazarwa for their constant encouragement and counsel. Naomi Owereh, Dr Margareth Gachara and Jerry Gachara for editing my work and encouraging me. I would also like to thank Mrs Anne Watkins for proofreading my work and my colleagues Wenjing Zhang and Paola Caro Osorio for their support and encouragement.

I am also very grateful to my supervisors, Prof Pauline Heslop and Dr Sandra Dowling for their support, guidance and supervision which has enabled me to successfully reach this stage.

Throughout this academic journey, I have had support from different people, strangers that have now become like family. It is not possible to name each person individually, but I hope you know who you are. I am grateful for your presence in my life and the role you have played.

I am profoundly grateful to you all and I can never repay or thank you enough. May God bless you abundantly.
Author’s declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:  
DATE: 04 MAY 2018
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACSEE</td>
<td>Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRWC</td>
<td>The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEST</td>
<td>Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRN</td>
<td>Big Results Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSEE</td>
<td>Certificate of Secondary Education Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CfBT</td>
<td>Centre for British Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>District Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSM</td>
<td>Dar es Salaam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETP</td>
<td>Education and Training Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith Based Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEG</td>
<td>World Bank Independent Evaluation Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA</td>
<td>Law of the Child Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCDGC</td>
<td>Tanzanian Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MESTVT</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoEVT</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Vocational Training’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBS</td>
<td>National Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDP</td>
<td>Primary Education Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMO-RALG</td>
<td>Prime Minister’s Office – Local Government Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO-RALG</td>
<td>President’s Office-Regional Administration and Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTE</td>
<td>Right To Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TETP</td>
<td>Tanzania Education and Training Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDV</td>
<td>Tanzania Development Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO,</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>The United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URT</td>
<td>United Republic of Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YP</td>
<td>Young People</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study was conducted in Tanzania’s coastal region of Dar es Salaam
Total area of Tanzania: 947,303sq km
Population: 55.575 million
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

Tanzania is a developing country and puts strong emphasis on educational achievement as a tool for the betterment of its people. Education is one of the aspects highlighted in the country’s development vision plan. The objective of the Tanzania Development Vision (TDV) 2025 is for the country to work towards achieving identified targets which will support development of the country. In its development plan, the country envisages a well-educated populace, which it hopes to achieve by developing a learning culture by 2025; where people have developmental mind-set and competitive spirit, driven by an education and knowledge-based value society.

This has been identified as a vital component in the TDV strategies for enabling people to utilize knowledge effectively, mobilize resources and attain competitiveness in the market economy (TDV 2025). The plan further envisioned attainment of creative, innovative and high-quality education that responds to needs and competes with evolving and development challenges both regionally and globally (TDV 2025).

Despite this vision as well as various government efforts and initiatives such as the Education for All (EFA), Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), the envisioned plan has not been realised. On the contrary, although it appears to have boosted enrolment rates, the effects on real social literacy levels remains debatable. This is detailed in the various reports that have comprehensively examined the quality of education.

The PEDP report of 2001 complemented the Universal Primary Education (UPE) strategy and contributed to a 16.2% increase in enrolment between 2004 and 2013 (Prime Minister’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, PMO-RALG 2014). A further enrolment increase of 5.1% was noted between 2014 and 2016, which has been attributed to the free education policy (President’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, PO-RALG, 2016).
Whilst PEDP increased primary education enrolment and is hailed and praised for this, it is not thought to be indicative of success. (PO-RALG, 2016). The inadvertent consequences have been class overcrowding with pupil to teacher ratios often above 50:1 and class sizes on average above 70. This has contributed to weak student performance and a diminishing quality of education which leaves learning outcomes unachieved (Wedgwood, 2007; Carlitz, 2009; Rwegoshora, 2011; Rono, 2012; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014; Schipper et al, 2014).

In the Tanzanian education system, assessments are carried out at the end of each term; whereby pupils sit for examinations in-school as prescribed by the curriculum. The other examinations are the National Examinations mandated under the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995. In Primary education, examinations are taken in Class Four and Class Seven. The outcome of the latter facilitates entry to secondary school. The government has set a universal pass mark in order for primary school pupils to progress to secondary education. In secondary education, examinations are taken in Forms Two, Four and Six.

In Form Two, students are also required to sit a national examination requiring them to attain a certain pass mark to enable them to proceed to Form Three. In Form Four which is the last year for lower, ordinary level secondary education students sit for national examinations to enable them to proceed to upper, advanced level secondary education (Forms Five and Six). Advanced level secondary education takes two years concluding in students sitting a final national examination that determines entry to tertiary, university education.

In recent years, there have been concerns by researchers and NGOs about the quality of education offered in Tanzania. These concerns are based on the outcome of the national examinations results for both pupils in primary education and students in secondary education where the pass rate is poor (Uwezo Tanzania, 2014; Rono 2012; Rajani 2001).

The criticism has principally been due to the fact that the literary abilities of those who pass these examinations and proceed to secondary education remains low, as reported in the 2014 Uwezo Tanzania report (Uwezo Tanzania, 2014). Data from the PO-RALG (2016) highlights the disparity between the total number of enrolled pupils in given classes before and after sitting national examinations, where the total number of pupils is reduced a year after having sat for a national examination. The disparity indicates a disproportionate number of children advancing to higher classes as expected.
Reasons have been given for this disparity - such as dropping out of school or having to repeat a class- however the criticism and complaint remains; that the number of children that perform poorly in national examinations or fail to sit for such examinations are those with low aptitude for numeracy and literacy (Uwezo Tanzania, 2014).

Kumburu (2011) reported that one out of four children in his study experienced literacy difficulties- particularly writing skills- and that at Class Seven (thirteen to fourteen-year olds), children could not read Class Two (seven to nine-year olds) materials. This is testament to the overcrowding, poor student to teacher ratios delivering substandard primary education and educational outcomes (Kumburu, 2011; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014).

When studying the PO-RALG 2016 data (see extract below) the number of children in various classes generally decreases each year as they progress to the next class. For example, data for 2012 Class 7 (909435), who subsequently are Form 1 in 2013 (514592), shows a significant decrease. Generally, when looking at the total number of any class in a particular year and comparing it to the total number of the following class in the following year, there is a significant decrease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>909435</td>
<td>885749</td>
<td>839751</td>
<td>814784</td>
<td>799894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 1</td>
<td>522379</td>
<td>514592</td>
<td>588873</td>
<td>448826</td>
<td>538826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 2</td>
<td>455653</td>
<td>583443</td>
<td>602902</td>
<td>418345</td>
<td>447895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>420193</td>
<td>261899</td>
<td>433361</td>
<td>387696</td>
<td>336951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>404585</td>
<td>368600</td>
<td>245144</td>
<td>393492</td>
<td>351921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class repetition is mostly ingrained in developing or low-income countries (Brophy, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008; Rono, 2012). A study by the United Nations indicated that 17% of primary school repeaters in the world are from Latin America and the Caribbean region (Global Educational Digest, 2012: 20).

In their reports, Brophy (2006) and Ndaruhutse (2008) observe Sub Saharan Africa to have had the highest primary school repetition rate of 15.5% in the world in the year 2002/2003 with Tanzania having 5% of repetition rate (Ndaruhutse, 2008). Rural areas in Sub Saharan developing countries are said to have the highest prevalence of class repetition (Brophy, 2006). Neither Brophy (2006) nor Ndaruhutse (2008) offers an explanation as to why this is the case. As such there isn’t much data with which to compare Tanzania with other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but class repetition practice does not seem to be outdated as evidenced by the existence of such data even beyond officially allowed levels.

This strategy for individuals to repeat a class has been the most common intervention in response to poor literacy and numeracy skills in Tanzania. This is considered to avail pupils additional support by holding them back a year group. This intervention seems to have increased due to many children not having acquired basic literacy abilities (Kumburu, 2011; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014).

The World Bank and HakiElimu, 2008 disagree with the implementation of the intervention and recommend that focus should be on improving children’s educational learning outcomes (World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG); Hakielimu, 2008:31).

In Tanzania, class repetition is still practiced beyond Class Four despite policy recommendations and stipulations. Notwithstanding World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG); Hakielimu, (2008) censure of the practice, the PO-RALG (2016) report still highlights an increase in rates of class repetition between 2014 -2016. The increment in

| Form 5 | 40890 | 39173 | 42484 | 90987 | 66624 |

source: Compiled from PO-RALG (2016) data
repetition rate could reflect the above views that education quality has become poor as a consequence of class overcrowding. Alternatively, since primary education was made free, parents preferred their children to stay in school longer rather than staying home after concluding their primary education. It may also be the case that parents hold their children back in free primary school as opposed to letting their children proceed to secondary education. It is important to understand the experience of those that have been retained, especially as they are in a country or society that emphasizes educational attainment.

Studies of class repetition in relation to educational outcomes are generally focused on three factors, which are: a) effects on academic achievement; b) effects on student self-esteem, peer relationships and c) effects on school operations (UNESCO, 2006). The studies, sponsored by UNESCO, are mainly authored in developed countries and extrapolating them to developing countries such as Tanzania, where the socio-cultural context is different, could lead to skewed conclusions.

Many studies have looked at the impact on educational outcomes (Pagani et al, 2001; Bowman, 2005; Jimerson et al, 2006; Välijärvi, 2008; Ndaruhtse, 2008; Jacob & Lefgren, 2009; Powell, 2010; West, 2012; Garcia-Perez et al, 2014) with individual pupil experiences receiving little attention-in particular where the effects on self-esteem, peer relationships, attitudes, societal acceptance and general social development are more likely to be influenced or manifested.

In light of this, this study sought to explore the experiences of young people repeating a class in Tanzania. Particular issues that were explored included their perceptions of repeating a class, the challenges they faced, if there was any support received at the time they were repeating a class and how they managed or coped with any challenges or difficulties they may have experienced. Furthermore, this study builds on and contributes to work about retaining pupils in their classes particularly those in primary schools who are held back in order to repeat a year.
1.1 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training (MESTVT)\(^1\) is responsible for all educational and vocational training matters from primary to tertiary levels. The responsibility of MESTVT entails policy development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies, registration of institutions, provision of education services and infrastructure.

MESTVT has a number of agencies and organisations under it that implement the policy directives. In particular primary and secondary education is administered under a sister Ministry, which is under the Prime Minister’s Office – Local Government Authority (PMO-RALG). Thus, MESTVT sets policy and quality control measures whilst PMO-RALG implements the policy directives through the schools it oversees.

Tanzania has maintained a British based education system since its independence in 1961 (Dennis and Stahley 2005). Generally, the schooling years are two optional years of pre-primary education, seven compulsory years of primary education, four optional years of Ordinary level secondary, two optional years of Advanced level secondary education and three or more optional years of university level (UNESCO, 2010). Though the final years from Ordinary level are optional, an increasing demand for skills and knowledge at higher levels is making these almost compulsory.

The two years of pre-primary education are for children of average age of five to six years and was only introduced into the formal education system by the Tanzania Education and Training Policy (TETP)\(^2\) in 1995 (TETP, 1995). The objectives of pre-primary education are largely socio-cultural and often this kind of education is - enhancing (TETP, 1995) considered as an opportunity to cater for child care thus literacy or numeracy skills are not given the same weight at this level as they would in primary education level. Compulsory

\(^1\) MESTVT was previously the Ministry for Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) up until late 2015 when the new 5\(^{th}\) Government instituted changes in the structure.

\(^2\) The Tanzania Education and Training Policy (TETP) was introduced to serve as a guide to the future development and provision of education and training in the country following various reviews and recommendations that saw restructuring of education systems that aimed at improving education quality and strengthening the link between education provided and social economic development of Tanzania (TETP, 1995)
education in Tanzania is the seven years of primary education, which caters for children from age seven to thirteen years.

At the introduction of universal free primary school education in 1978, the primary education was made compulsory through the Education Act. This was well received in the country as it increased accessibility to education for all resulting in an increase in the number of children enrolled in primary school level. At this level the children are intended to be equipped with basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Secondary education is divided into two levels; O’ level (four years, from Form One to Four) and A’ level (two years, from Forms Five to Six). At O’ level, students take two national examinations; one at Form Two which assesses achievement and progress and the second at Form Four which assesses learning achievement and selects students for A’ level secondary education (UNESCO, 2012; EP-Nuffic, 2015). At A’ level, students take a national examination in their last year where successful completion gives access to higher education and university (TETP, 1995; UNESCO, 2012).

1.2 QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania, there has been increasing discontent over the quality and quantity of education being delivered as performance in National Examinations decreases (Hakielimu, 2008; 2009; Rono, 2012; Carlitz, 2009). At primary level, Mmbaga (2002) reported that about 2% - 5% of children finish their seven years of compulsory primary education without the basic literacy skills expected of them.

Despite Mmbaga’s publication being over a decade old, the concerns are still pertinent today, as various reports from civil society (Hakielimu, 2008; 2009) and research (Carlitz, 2009; Rono, 2012,) attest. According to Schipper et al (2014) report, pupils in higher classes were reported to have reading skills of a level below them as they were unable to read extract from lower classes (Schipper et al, 2014). This is further evidenced by the UWEZO report, which points to the low literacy and numeracy abilities of class 3 children (Rono, 2012).
Literacy and numeracy outcomes remain poor, despite an increase in enrolment (Rono, 2012; Schipper et al, 2014). According to Rono (2012), young people in Kenya were performing better in both literacy and numeracy compared to their counterparts in Tanzania with class repetition observed to be a more prevalent practice in Tanzania in response to the poor literacy and numeracy. In Tanzania, the focus of early identification of literacy and numeracy difficulties and intervention is geared towards preventing failure and thus boosting academic achievement and performance (Kalanje, 2011).

The UNESCO\(^3\) report of 2012 reported that the number of children enrolled in a given level of education was artificially inflated by repetition, posing a challenge in determining the actual number of enrolled children and thus distorting the measure of school participation and coverage.

Rono’s (2012) report, which looked at the performance of primary school children in Tanzania, reported that 319,738 children in 2008 repeated a class with Class Four having the highest repetition number of 170,839. This high repetition rate is claimed to be due to the restriction imposed on repetition beyond class four. BEST data for 2013 (PMO – RALG 2014) (Table 2 below) shows overall repetition in primary schools to be less at 55,302.

Data points to Class Three having the highest number of class repetitions at 13,578. Although the overall number of those repeating a class has declined in the period of five years (2008-2013), this practice is still active even beyond Class 4 as reflected in the latest report by (PMO – RALG 2016).

\(^{3}\) In 2012, UNESCO published an analysis of the education sector in Tanzania, providing a ‘comprehensive picture of mainland Tanzania’s education sector’ and providing evidence to ‘enable decision-makers to orient national policies’ (UNESCO, 2012:14).

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
SEX & \textbf{CLASS} & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 & TOTAL \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Primary School Repeaters, 2013}
\end{table}
Total enrolment has increased by 5.1% from 8,222,667 pupils in year 2014 to 8,639,202 pupils in year 2016. This increase has been contributed to by an increase of Class 1 pupils’ enrolment as a result of fee free education policy and also the presence of strong partnership between government and parents, Faith-based organizations (FBOs) and Community-based organizations (CBOs) in provision of Primary Education.

According to the Tanzanian National Education Policy, repeating a class is a provision for children who are in Class One - Class Four. Beyond this, the policy does not make such allowances except in exceptional circumstances. Both the 2013 BEST report (PMO – RALG, 2014) and Rono (2012) publications fail to provide tangible reasons for the observed numbers of class repetition particularly for those that are restricted by the policy (those in Class Five - Class Seven).

However, it has been observed that the large class sizes limit teacher-student rapport that may have facilitated early identification of learning difficulties. The subsequent delay in identifying these needs may thus contribute to class repetition, as teachers have insufficient time to pay attention to the individual cases of students struggling with reading and writing (Carlitz 2009; Rono, 2012).

In Tanzania, class repetition is a response to underachievement and although it may not be a preferred intervention it is noted to be practised nevertheless (UNESCO, 2012; Rono, 2012; PMO – RALG 2014; Schipper et al 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>6670</th>
<th>5190</th>
<th>7572</th>
<th>6222</th>
<th>1215</th>
<th>1826</th>
<th>964</th>
<th>29659</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>5351</td>
<td>4667</td>
<td>6006</td>
<td>4701</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>2666</td>
<td>25643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12021</td>
<td>9857</td>
<td>13578</td>
<td>10923</td>
<td>2233</td>
<td>3060</td>
<td>3630</td>
<td>55302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Pre- Primary, Primary and Secondary Education Statistics 2013- BEST (PMO – RALG 2014)*
1.3 UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Underachievement describes low levels of academic achievement compared to those formally set based on individual or collective ability (Gorard & Smith, 2004; DENI, 2011). It is applicable to an individual pupil, to describe a class, a school or a system (DENI, 2011). A recent definition by Stuart (2014) expounds previous understanding to include comparisons that are not only academic but also socio-cultural.

According to Stuart (2014) underachievement “is relative to what a pupil could be predicted to achieve based on prior attainment or could be thought of in terms of a comparison with another group, such as children from more prosperous homes, a different ethnic group, or a different part of the country” (Stuart, 2014:11). Notably, ‘underachievement’ is distinguished from ‘low achievement’ whereby the latter describes a pupil achieving the full extent of their ability but is well below average compared to her or his peers (Smith, 2007, DENI, 2011). The distinction is important when applying measurements to specific circumstances (Smith, 2003; Smith, 2007).

Generally, underachievement signifies poor academic performance with consequences such as social exclusion, delinquent behaviour, poor social relationships and poor participation in the labour market (Gorard & Smith, 2004).

Measures to assess underachievement can be contentious and at times the observed ‘underachievement’ may be a result of education reforms or the nature of assessment itself (Gorard & Smith, 2004). In many schools, underachievement is addressed by class repetition with the assumption that additional time spent relearning what one was taught will bring about improved performance (Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al, 2006; Brophy, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008; Abbott et al, 2010).

1.4 STUDY OBJECTIVES
This study’s investigative focus on exploring the phenomenon of class repetition was to seek and gain an understanding of the experience of young people who had to repeat a class in their primary school education as well as exploring the perspectives of parents and their observations of their child’s experiences of repeating a class.

Specifically, the study aimed:

To establish and document young people’s perceptions of class repetition and their experience of repeating a class, including the impact of this experience both in the formal setting (school) and informal setting (family or home and community environment).

To generate a theoretical or functional model that will help to understand the impact of this experience on young people’s psychosocial wellbeing and economic participation in a society where education attainment is given the utmost value and is seen as a catalyst for social mobility.

To develop policy recommendations based on an approach that is child focused and is informed by young people’s views and their lived experiences.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions to be addressed were:

1) What are the perceptions of young people who have had to repeat classes in primary school?
2) Can the documented perceptions be used to generate a functional or theoretical model?
3) What policy recommendations and interventions can be made to benefit the affected young people and the system at large?
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE

This study is of significance to young people as it provided them with the opportunity to have their voices, perspectives and experiences of class repetition heard and understood— not only by the researcher but also by policy makers, programme implementers, parents and other stakeholders in the education field. There is an enormous amount of literature associated with the existing duality between the practice of promoting pupils and the alternative of retaining them, in order to determine which policy is more favourable (Bali et al., 2005).

Furthermore, data and information gathered from young people regarding their experience of repeating a class adds value to social work initiatives by illuminating the different aspects of retained young people’s lives and the various systems involved in their lives that both teachers and social workers can support and be involved with in order to facilitate and promote changes and improvements in these young people’s learning outcomes.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since class repetition is a result of cumulative factors from both the individual and their environment (Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008); an ecological system approach may be useful when evaluating both the short-term and the long-term outcomes of retained students (Jimerson et al, 2006). Powell (2010) observes that it is important to consider the different systems surrounding individuals in order to have a comprehensive and integrated understanding and insight of their lives (Powell, 2010). Individuals need to be understood in their context and how that can play a part in enabling them to manage the various aspects of their lives through different situations and stresses. The theoretical framework for this study was based on resilience and ecological system theories and how these two are interconnected. These theories are examined in regard to the role they play in understanding, minimizing or managing the impact and experience of class repetition in children, their families and their surroundings.
Resilience has thus been defined as the individual’s or system’s ability to absorb shock and adapt, cope, develop and bounce back despite challenges or trauma and risks encountered (Greenberg, 2006; Eriksson et al, 2010; Cote & Nightingale, 2012; Masten, 2014). Resilience is not a one-off attribute that one is expected to have or acquire in a day, but rather an ongoing process that is influenced by the ‘daily happenings’ in individuals’ lives (Greenberg, 2006). It can be defined as, “positive or protective processes that reduce maladaptive outcomes under conditions of risk” (Greenberg, 2006:141).

Resilience is observed and assessed by the quality of interaction between individuals and their environment and how effective this interaction is in enabling individuals to have positive outcome in the face of adversity (Kaplan, 1996; Ungar et al, 2013; Benard, 2014; Greene, 2014). Resilience is central to children’s development and wellbeing as it enables them to ‘bounce’ back without significant negative impact, despite the stresses, risks or challenges faced (Rak & Patterson, 1996; Berk, 2007; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Eriksson et al, 2010; Masten, 2014).

Although underachievement and subsequent class repetition as an intervention is a field that has been fairly well researched, there seems to be a scarcity of clear theories or perspectives linked to this discourse. This has further been echoed by Everson (2015) in her work, where she observes the ‘little’ existence of research that looks at students’ resilience to stressful situations and how this can be fostered.

Resilience studies are often influenced by ecological system. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory expounds on the existence of interactions between individuals and their environment and how such interactions can mutually influence each other (Rak and Patterson, 1996; Ungar et al, 2013). As such resilience cannot be fostered based on personal traits or the environment but rather by looking at how personal traits, the environment and other systems interact (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Berk, 2007; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012; Ungar et al, 2013).

Greene (2014) postulates the dependence of resilience on individuals’ ecological systems, observing this to be resting on an ecological system conceptual base that explains how people adapt to stress and maintain their daily functioning (Greene, 2014:937).
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory considers individual’s existence to be within an intricate system of interaction and relationships. The theory is nested on the belief that an individual’s surrounding environment has an influence on their development. These environments are divided into various levels: microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. Microsystem level interactions are the direct day-to-day interactions that have a direct impact on individuals and their development.

Mesosystem level interactions are those between individuals and their families, neighbourhood and communities. These interactions are interconnected and influence each other having a direct or indirect impact on individuals. The macrosystem level interactions are indirect with the wider society and do not have a direct influence, impact or control on individuals’ lives or development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Berk, 2007).

Even though individuals have indirect interactions with the macrosystem, this level has a significant role on individuals’ development because interactions at the microsystem and mesosystem levels are ascribed to the cultural, geo-political demands, rules and norms of the macrosystem (wider society) that individuals live in (Berk, 2007).

Kaplan et al (1996) note that resilience is characterized by two factors; risk that triggers stress and may result in vulnerability, and protective factors that help in resisting the effect of this vulnerability acting as a safety net. For resilience to exist or even be observed, both risk and protective factors need to be present; where risk factors inhibit resilience, protective factors promote it. Resilience is considered possible where there is social support as this buffers the impact of adversity and can be achieved based on the engagement and complex interplay of certain personal characteristics and ecological systems (Greene, 2014; Rak and Patterson, 1996).

Protective factors exist at all levels of a person’s interactions, i.e. at individual (microsystem), family (mesosystem) and societal levels (macrosystem) (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012) hence inter-related to the environment and the system surrounding the individuals. In some cultures, resilience is believed to be connected with the wider community support systems (Masten, 2014) thus pointing to the role of ecological system in fostering resilience.
While there are benefits accrued by the social interactions, there can also be disadvantages such as too much responsibility at the household level, community and the society at large which can interfere with the learning programme of the young person.

Resilience and ecological systems have been linked in order to look at how well individuals are able to respond to adversities in their environment (Greene, 2014). Ungar et al (2013) call for an environment centred approach when working with children, recommending that an individual’s development, whether positive or negative, does not take place in isolation but rather through interactions with the larger environment. Understanding the ecological system and its influence on one’s resilience thus helps in developing interventions that are “multi-systemic and that provide a way of focusing on factors amenable to provide positive change, whilst avoiding simplistic solutions that have poor long-term outcomes” (Ungar et al, 2013:360). Furthermore, there is a need for everyone involved with a child to work together to determine the intervention that will best yield positive outcomes academically, socially and emotionally; where individuals’ circumstances that draw on their ecological systems and how this promotes their resilience need to be considered before any such decisions are made (Jackson, 1975; David, 2008; Powell, 2010).

Underachievement or poor achievement may be a result of different factors that may require both the ecological system and resilience theory to be used in understanding individuals’ circumstances, their support networks and systems that can foster their resilience in the event of class repetition (Ungar et al, 2013). It has been established that, there is an existing link between risk, resilience and educational success albeit a complex one (Bernat, 2009).

Therefore, because of the potential negative impacts on those young people who have to repeat a year at school, fostering resilience to enable them to manage their experiences and promote positive outcomes is paramount to these children’s wellbeing (Ungar et al, 2013; Greene, 2014). It is the role of parents, teachers and policy makers to ensure children are linked with their social systems at all levels (microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem) and understand how resilient they are within these systems.
1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an overview of the education system in Tanzania, and how the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 sets the stage by emphasising the importance of education for the development of the country’s human skills as the bedrock to achieving its objectives. The introduction of Education for All, the Universal Primary Education and the Primary Education Development Programme are efforts towards achieving a critical mass of educated human resource to achieve development goals of TDV 2025.

Nonetheless, these government interventions have not been without challenges; among these being the quality of education, overcrowding in the classrooms, inadequate infrastructure to deal with the large numbers of school enrolments and lack of trained teachers to meet the pupil-teacher ratio as recommended by UNESCO.

As a result, several researchers examining the education system in Tanzania have reported a decline in the quality of education where many pupils finish their primary school education without achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills. In response to this decline pupils have had to repeat classes as an intervention.

However, there are contradicting views on the benefits of class repetition, and as such, this study sets out to examine and bring new light on the subject of class repetition by exploring the experiences of young people who have had to repeat a class. In doing so, various literatures were reviewed in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject, focusing on various aspects of class repetition as detailed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. INTRODUCTION

Literacy and numeracy difficulties in young people can contribute to underachievement and lack of progress in school particularly where there is lack of early intervention (Bowman-Perrot, 2010; West, 2012). Class repetition has been used in different parts of the world as an intervention that holds struggling learners back for another year to aid them with their learning and provide them with the opportunity to re-learn and attain the required grades or test scores needed to proceed to the next level (Bowman, 2005; Brophy, 2006; Välijärvi, 2008; Jacob & Lefgren, 2009; Abbott et al, 2010). Ndaruhutse (2008); Jacob & Lefgren (2009); Abbott et al, (2010) and West (2012) all observe that as an intervention, class repetition is more commonly practised in the early years of primary school education.

As well as passing examinations, Ndaruhutse (2008) underscores the fact that class repetition can be considered to provide a supportive role such as; I) where students need to intellectually and academically catch up with their peers; ii) where students are too young, and immature compared to their peers; iii) where teachers need to create a homogenous class of students with similar academic ability.

Despite studies suggesting class repetition to be a viable and effective intervention (West, 2012; Tingle et al. 2012), some research registers counterproductive outcomes of the intervention (Jimerson, 2001; Bowman, 2005; Brophy, 2006; Jimerson et al, 2006; Bonvin et al, 2008; Ndaruhutse, 2008; Välijärvi, 2008; Bowman-Perrott, 2010; Tingle et al, 2012) citing these outcomes as short-lived and having far reaching consequences into the affected young people’s adulthood.

As a corrective intervention, class repetition is criticised for paying minimal attention to reasons and causal factors behind underachievement (Ejakait et al 2016). The consequence of such intervention is the focus being too much on the young person’s short comings (Bosire 2103). Proponents of the automatic promotion policy such as Steiner (1986) point to the fact that repetition does not improve the achievement of the low-achiever, since each class will carry the retained student into the following year as a source of a difference in ability (Ndaruhustse, 2008; and Peterson et al., 1987).
Chimombo (2005) argues that, retaining students results in high student-classroom ratios and consequently high student-teacher ratios which invariably lowers the quality of education. The action of subjecting the affected young people to ‘re-do’ the same subjects as the year before, presents a risk of demotivating students and affecting their self-esteem (David, 2008; Ndaruhtuse, 2008; Bowman-Perrot, 2010). This argument in terms of individual development is reiterated by Marsh et al (2009). They note that not only does the practice have an adverse effect on pupils’ self-esteem, but it also affects their motivation to learn. Class repetition further stigmatizes pupils and affects their relationship with their peers. This inadvertently results in the retained pupils being alienated from their new peers in the class they are retained in and from their old peers who progressed to the next class. Holmes (1989) claims that this eventually results in the early exiting from the schooling cycle. Although Holmes observations are almost three decades old, truanting following class repetition is still prevalent (Roderick, 1994; Eide & Showalter, 2001; Fredericks et al., 2004).

Understanding the effects of class repetition from the perception of those that have experienced it can enhance strategies to improve education experiences, learning outcomes and influence positive future social outcomes. The pace of development of any country depends on a critical mass of an educated workforce and this is true for Tanzania.

In an effort to combat poor literacy and numeracy skill, and to meet the developmental needs of the country, the Tanzanian government has developed education policies and strategies which emphasise methods that purely address the literacy and numeracy challenges as well as poor examination outcomes. As such, effects of class repetition and particularly perceptions of the affected young people have not been studied extensively, limiting improvement to the policies and strategies to ensure quality education and social outcomes.

**2.1 RATIONALE FOR CLASS REPETITION**

Despite the prevalence of class repetition practices in many countries, most of the aforementioned research carried out on this topic has been conducted in the United States;
notwithstanding that class repetition is only used as the last remedy in primary education. Nonetheless, scrutiny of the causes behind the decision about class repetition, using a cross-country approach are still scarce in the literature (Dalton, 2012).

Troncin (2006 cited in Ndaruhutse) argues that class repetition is the easiest and most perceptible response in trying to manage the learning difficulties of pupils. However, research as to why educators recommend it for students remains underdeveloped (Bonvin et al., 2008). In their study, Range et al (2013) asked a very important question; “Despite the one-sided nature of research that argues grade retention is not effective, why do educators continue to perceive grade retention as beneficial?” (2012: 3).

Range et al (2005) drew attention to some key pieces of literature in their study and revealed that typically class repetition is viewed as a decision made at school level by either the head or class teachers. They went on to note that in past enquiries, teachers’ views and beliefs about class repetition were biased by peers not research (Bonvin et al, 2008, Witmer et al, 2004). It is claimed that this causes teachers to opt for retention of pupils who have analogous characteristics like being male, minority and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Burkam et al, 2007, Cannon and Lipscomb, 2011 cited in Range et al, 2011).

Previous studies indicate that the reasons that teachers gave for recommending class repetition included poor academic achievement and a lack of maturity (Range et al, 2011b, Tomchin and Impara, 1992 cited in Range et al). What is more, educators are said to perceive immaturity as the cause of early learning problems and believed pupils simply needed more time to mature (Range et al 2011). Further exploration of the literature found that teachers, especially primary school teachers, believe repeating a class is a viable option for students who are struggling (Bali et al 2005).

A study conducted among 5 middle schools in Florida by Wynn (2010), with 326 survey responses revealed that over 76% of teachers agreed that poor academics were the major reason for pupils repeating a class. Over 65% of teacher agreed that repeating a class allowed students who were behind academically to catch up with peers. However, nearly 39% of the teachers disagreed, holding the view that class repetition is harmful to a child’s self-concept, self-image. A consensus of nearly 80% of teachers agreed that repeating a class affects a child’s self-esteem. (Wynn, 2010).
2.2 RISK FACTORS FOR CLASS REPETITION

In this section we look briefly at the factors that may be associated with the probability of a pupil repeating a class. Ferguson et al (2001); Wilson & Hughes (2009) note that, being of a male gender and living in poverty could be a factor that may lead to a pupil repeating a class. Frey (2005) suggests that little or no parental involvement or interest in the young person’s education, as well as a lack of discipline in the home are risk factors to repeating a class. Pupils from low social status are more likely to struggle with learning and exhibit poor literacy outcomes due to the fact that they may not have had prior pre-education opportunities or learning resources (Ngorosho & Lahtinen, 2010; Kumburu, 2011; Kalanje, 2011).

Other factors can cause poor academic performance warranting involuntary repetition such as the existence of family or health problems which cause school absenteeism (Cordero and Agasisti 2011). During the early stages of the educational system, pupils who exhibit immaturity and have recurring social problems can have their learning process adversely affected (Jimerson & Ferguson 2007). Language difficulties may be a factor especially if the language of instruction is not the same as the child’s first language. This is especially the case in immigrant children (Ngorosho & Lahtinen, 2010; Kumburu, 2011; Kalanje, 2011).

Cordero & Agasiti (2011), suggest that there are four groups among the numerous factors that can be broadly identified. These are (I) family’s socioeconomic background (ii) early childhood activities and skills, (iii) available (economic and cultural) resources and (iv) the student composition of the school attended. They (Cordero and Agasiti 2011) argue that, in general, the higher the socioeconomic condition of the family (and its resources made available to the student) the lower the probability that the student will be retained. Furthermore, attending a school where the proportion of students is from well to do families lowers the probability of being retained. This appears to be in line with previous literature (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Sirin, 2005; Perry & McConney, 2010; Wills, 2010), which highlights the positive effects exerted by the family and peers’ socioeconomic background.
In addition to these individual factors, the most significant school variables identified as predictors of the possibility of being retained are: large class size, frequent teacher absence or an unfavourable environment in the class (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008).

2.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CLASS REPETITION

2.3.1 Advantages of class repetition

Proponents of class repetition believe that the practice helps students to positively develop their maturity especially where repetition of the class happens earlier on in the education cycle. Teachers’ recommendation to have preschool children repeat a class is often based on the assessments of these children’s attention span, intellectual and social maturity, social adjustments and being able to follow instructions (Brophy, 2006).

However, moving on from first grade, retention recommendations are often based on indicators of achievement progress (Beebe et al, 2004). MacGrath (2006) argues that in Australia repeating a class is accepted by most schools as a viable solution and intervention for those children whose learning is behind compared to their peers or are considered to be socially immature. Fertig (2004); Jacob & Lefgren (2009) concur with this practice and argue that the impact of class repetition on children is dependent on the class they are retained in. They argue that lower class (early on in the education cycle) repetition has a more positive effect compared to upper class repetition, suggesting that earlier repetition gives students a greater opportunity to catch up with their peers.

West (2012) further echoes the benefits of early class repetition being preferable and with less impact to the affected young people as compared with when it occurs later. Class repetition outcomes are likely to be influenced by an individual’s social support network (eco-system) as well as emotional wellbeing, which is dependent on their resilience and coping capabilities as postulated by Jimerson et al (2006). A comparison of repeaters with other low- achievers who were either promoted or recommended for placement in special
education, do not show that there is a significant group difference in intelligence achievement or even competence (Corman, 2003; Martin et al, 2004).

2.3.2 Disadvantages of class repetition

Studies suggest that repeating a class as an intervention to improve academic achievement or enhance socio emotional and behavioural adjustment does not work (MacGrath, 2006). The argument put forward is that whereas there might be the exceptional students who will benefit from class repetition, for most students providing them with more of what did not work in the first place is an exercise in futility (MacGrath, 2006).

Studies by Thompson & Cunningham (2000) argue that class repetition is harmful and generally risky, regardless of the age or class of the individuals are retained. They suggest that repeating a class is stressful and is therefore likely to have an impact, regardless of how minimal this may be. They attribute this harm occurring due to the fact that repeating is a visible demonstration of ‘failure’ and may adversely influence any teachers’ perceptions and expectations about the retained student for a long time and perhaps through the student academic cycle (Shaw et al, 2003).

Where the education systems place direct or indirect pressure on schools and students to meet set targets for standards, those unable to meet them are ‘blamed’ for failing to utilize given opportunities and learning provided and ‘are punished’ by repeating a class (Brophy, 2006; Välijärvi, 2008). In such cases, social and developmental outcomes tend to be negative and short-term (Pagani et al, 2001; Brophy, 2006, David, 2008; Välijärvi, 2008; Jacob & Lefgren, 2009). Pagani et al (2001) argue that the psychological and social consequences of repeating a class eventually manifest themselves into long-term risks and negative outcomes. For instance, Jimerson (2001) notes that the social behaviour of students who repeat do not seem to improve any more than that of their promoted peers in many cases he observes it actually deteriorates. Shephard and Smith (1990) observe that having to repeat represents a loss of social status, and that this goes on to contribute to a negative attitude toward school and learning- where students disengage from learning and the repeated students associate school
and learning with humiliation and threat, (Jimerson 2001). Class repetition is a public declaration of poor academic performance and inability. As such, the affected young person is more likely to encounter further difficulties in their learning.

2.4 IMPACT OF CLASS REPETITION

There is literature that brings to light a different body of research focused on studying the advantages and disadvantages of repeating a class (Ferguson et al., 2001; Wilson & Hughes, 2009). In all these studies a common factor relates to the probability of repeating a class.

The Annual Statistical Digest (2009-2010), which provides the most recent statistics, believes that when students repeat a grade it affects their self-esteem and self-concept leading to their performance being worse than it was before. Additionally, from a social perspective, students who were made to repeat a year were more likely to drop out of school later on (Brophy, 2006, CfBT, 2008, David, 2008, PISA report, 2009, Jimerson, 2012, NASP, n.d).

This is compounded with having to live with the stigma and may result in low self-esteem which influences the motivation to learn and develop a positive attitude to school and learning (Bowman, 2005; Ndaruhutse, 2008; Välijärvi, 2008; Powell, 2010; West, 2012). Pagani et al (2001), Jimerson et al (2006) and Ndaruhutse (2008) argue that the stigma experienced is more to do with the fact that they are not seen as ‘clever’ enough to proceed to another class and peer group friendship is lost.

Even when handled sensitively, having low self-esteem and low motivation will ultimately result in retained students doubting their ability. This may create a sense of helplessness as they are aware they have failed, and their peers are also aware they have failed. For most students this creates intense feelings of unworthiness, a sense of shame and stigma (Alexander et al, 1994; Shepard & Smith, 1990; Thomas 1992). Thus, a vicious cycle is created, as being perceived as a failure could mean students put less efforts in their learning. Furthermore, Pagani et al (2001) suggest students may experience humiliation, peer ridicule,
labelling and a long-lasting inaccurate understanding of being retained as a form of punishment for failing.

This often leads to further underachievement and possible drop-out as reported by Thompson & Cunningham (2000), Bowman, (2005), Jimerson et al, (2006), Ndaru hutse, (2008), Välijärvi (2008) and Powell, (2010). Furthermore, the long-term outcomes do not seem to do much in terms of the achievement differences; rather it widens and maintains the achievement gap (Välijärvi, 2008; Tingle et al, 2012). This is because retained students are reported to perform far worse than if they had not been retained or than expected both academically and emotionally (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000:2).

The experience of repeating a class has further been reported to be traumatic and arguably stressful as individuals have to carry the shame of failure publicly within an environment surrounded by new class peers as well as dealing with the loss of their previous peers with whom they were comfortable, thus making the ‘new’ adjustments difficult (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000; Ndaru hutse, 2008; Tingle et al, 2012).

Class repetition has also been observed to have long-term repercussions with implications in various aspects of individuals’ lives (Pagani et al, 2001; Jimerson, 2006; García-Pérez, 2014). Students potentially find themselves in low skilled employment equating to low income or being unable to maintain job thus becoming unemployed and living in poverty (Pagani et al, 2001; Bowman, 2005; Jimerson et al, 2006). Bowman, (2005), Brophy, (2006), Jimerson et al, (2006), Jacob & Lefgren, (2009) discuss that this potentially leads to dependence on welfare systems, engagement in crime or anti-social behaviours leading to being incarcerated, having poor peer relationships and being depressed. Additional implications are the delay in school completion which delays the entry of the affected young people to the labour market (Bonvin et al, 2008; Tingle et al, 2012).

The impact of class repetition differs from individual to individual as people are unique and respond differently to experiences (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000). The variation of the impact and general experience of class repetition is dependent on the family, school and community context hence there is a need to understand the affected young people’s perspectives from their experiences and see how these influences or help in the management of class repetition (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000).
Despite this clear gap, research on class repetition has tended to focus on the short-term benefits and inherently long-term negative impacts without drawing on the ecological system of individual young people to see how this might have a role in aggravating the long-term impact observed.

Cumulative factors from both the individual, family background and surrounding environment need to be considered to provide a more informative scenario of how class repetition can be implemented with benefit to the affected young people (Jimerson et al., 2006). The repercussions go beyond the affected young people, to families, schools and the wider community and thus a more holistic approach is needed (Brophy, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008). Furthermore, class repetition is thought of as one of the best or strongest predictors of student dropping out later on, in their academic career (Roderick, 1994; Eide & Showalter, 2001), and this is the culminating event of a gradual process of disconnection from schooling, including a lack of motivation, mediocre effort and truancy (Fredericks et al., 2004).

It is especially worrying particularly if we take into account that repetition rates depend significantly on socioeconomic factors (Corman, 2003), therefore inadvertently class repetition can contribute to increased inequality within an educational system. It is of utmost importance to find different models to deal with students’ early difficulties and academic heterogeneity (Dupriez et al., 2008); and these alternatives sought should be both at policy-based and managerial level.

Other studies have indicated that this intervention can have a negative effect on parent educational expectations (Hughes et al., 2013) leading to social, emotional, attitudinal and behavioural problems (McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Pagani et al., 2001). Nevertheless, some studies have pointed out the limitations of those earlier studies citing that they suffer from significant methodological shortcomings (Lorence, 2006; Wu et al., 2008; Allen et al., 2009; Reschly & Christenson, 2013).

In light of the policy directives and interventions to improve the education delivery and outcomes in Tanzania, there is paucity in information that addresses the impacts, effects or outcome of students repeating a class in primary schools or what long-term outcomes are
observed on these students. Studies on the impact of repeating a class largely emanated from developed countries (Brophy, 2006), and therefore cannot necessarily be extrapolated for use in developing countries, as repetition may be voluntary or involuntary in developing countries. As such, there is a need for further research to examine the effectiveness of this practice, its impact and long-term repercussions as well as to examine the experiences of those who have had to repeat a class.

2.5 PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF CLASS REPETITION

Feedback from children and young people points to the importance of professionals listening to children’s concerns, their perceptions and how or what they consider to be helpful (Hill, 1999). Students’ views on repetition have implications on the intervention and the impact this has on them (Jimerson et al, 2006).

Students consider class repetition to be a major stress contributor (Fertig, 2004; Brophy, 2006; Tingle et al, 2012) due to the stigma associated with it (Bowman, 2005; Valijarvi, 2008; Powell, 2010; West, 2012). Both Anderson et al (2005) paper that examined children’s ratings of stressful experiences and Jimerson et al (2006) paper that provided a synthesis of research on class repetition, report that children found the experience of class repetition to be as stressful as the loss of a parent or loss of sight, with older children even considering repetition to be the most stressful life event.

The majority of young people in the study reported to dislike the idea of repeating a class, seeing it as a sign of failure and loss of status. In reality students see repetition as more of a punishment imposed on them by their parents and teachers for their low achievement (Byrnes 1998).

Ndaruhutse (2008) observes that often children did not want to disclose their repetition status to their ‘new classmates’ for fear of being scorned or laughed at. They wanted acceptance and integration and found their situation stressful and humiliating.
2.6 SUMMARY

The interventionist policy of class repetition has attracted a lot of attention primarily in the field of education, sociology and psychology, and more recently it has become the focus of economic research owing to the extra financial burden borne by parents, guardians and governments.

The revision of the various literatures on class repetition indicate that despite the potential short-term benefits accrued by repeating a class (Jacob & Lefgren, 2004, 2009; Dong, 2010; Hughes et al., 2013), there are also some harmful effects of the practice. As such, repetition remains a contested practice in schools. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of studies that provide lived experiences of retained young people and their perceived or constructed impact of class repetition on their lives. There is a need for all involved with young people to work together to determine the best intervention that will yield positive outcomes academically, socially and emotionally for retained young people based on their experiences.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed discussion on the methodological paradigm used, approach and research methods used and the rationale for using the chosen method. Details of the study population are given and how the selection process was carried out. The chapter also provides details of the sampling technique and the rationale for this as well as how research participants were accessed.

Field work details have also been outlined as well as addressing ethical dilemmas that arose during data collection process. Also, the chapter addresses aspects of data management and data analysis, providing details on the analysis methods and discusses issues of validity, reliability and reflexivity.

3. INTRODUCTION

The choice of a methodological approach in a study is dependent on the extent of the researcher’s involvement as well as the depth or breadth of knowledge she intends to gather (Gilbert, 2001; Olson, 2011). Research studies can be conducted using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approaches. In a quantitative approach, truth is considered to be pre-existing and understood objectively through theory and hypotheses testing. This process involves a large sample size that generates large amounts of data that is quantifiable and can be generalised (Tuli, 2010; May, 2011; Flick, 2014). Qualitative approaches focus on seeking and understanding reality through construction and interpretation of meanings where both the researcher and participants are involved in the process (Mason, 2002; Creswell, 2014).

In studies where a qualitative or quantitative approach may not be ideal or would not provide enough information or data, a mixed method approach is used, (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach was chosen and considered ideal for this study as this approach helps to explore and understand how interpretation and construction of meanings are reached through participants’ lens and how meanings and interactions are interpreted and constructed (Mason, 2002: Creswell, 2014).
3.1 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study and the subsequent model developed is based solely on participants’ experiences and the meaning that was constructed from it. King & Horrocks (2010), Olson (2011), Creswell (2013), (2014), Flick (2014) and Remenyi (2014) identify this stand as a Constructivist paradigm. The paradigm is niched on the belief that truth is subjective and is socially constructed based on individuals’ interactions and interpretations of their views, experiences and how these are constructed to form meanings (King & Horrocks, 2010; Flick, 2014).

Constructivists believe in the subjective nature of reality, the significance of individuals’ social interactions, their social interconnectedness and individuals’ interactions with their environment (Olson, 2011; Flick, 2014). A researcher relies on participants’ views or description of the situation (Creswell, 2013). Ontologically, constructivists believe ‘knowledge to be related to the way in which we organize our experiential world’ (Flick, 2014:77). The construction of reality is based on individuals’ experiences, regardless of whether that reality is true or not. The emphasis is how one constructs and perceives it. These constructions are done through communication and cannot be considered as static.

The construction of knowledge is dependent on others, through social interactions and the use of language. As such, when conducting a study, individuals’ views, experiences and perspectives are to be understood within their social and environmental context as well as the language or nuance used. This sought ‘truth’ is multifaceted and can never be considered as the only or single truth as, due to the various contexts individuals live in and social actors, different meanings are attached to phenomena (Clarke, 2001; Tuli, 2010).

This study’s philosophical assumption is based on the constructivist paradigm; where young people’s interactions with their peers, families and environment were examined in order to understand various settings of individuals’ lives, the influence between the interactions and their surrounding systems and how the experience of repeating a class has been constructed by these young people and their parents. The constructivist paradigm was considered relevant.
because participants are likely to have had different meanings attached to their experiences, despite all of them having repeated a class at one time.

### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative approach as described by Mason, (2002) and Creswell (2014) that constructs and interprets a ‘sought reality’ was considered appropriate for this particular study as it enabled exploration of sampled individuals’ perceptions. Based on the total sample size of the study (n=19), quantitative approach would not have been ideal as the sample size would have made quantification statistically redundant (Tuli, 2010; May, 2011; Flick, 2014).

The study was conducted in young people’s schools and also within their homes which provided the researcher with an insight into these young people school environments, living conditions and surrounding neighbourhoods. This resonated with Creswell (2014) advise to have studies conducted in individuals’ natural settings.

The study used an approach that was both inductive and deductive in data analysis using thematic analysis where the researcher was responsible for the data collection process, translating interview transcripts, analysis and interpretation. The inductive analysis involved coding data at the source, *in vivo* which according to Mason (2002) and Creswell (2014) informs theory development that is grounded in the data. Analysis of the study drew on the description and construction of meaning from interview participants to form a functional model from which policy recommendations and interventions emanate.

Since there is scarcity of research and lack of documented experience for young people who have been retained in classes in the Tanzanian context, the advantage of a qualitative approach is that it provided a platform for these young people to explore their experiences and provide an opportunity for interpretation of these experiences that future studies can draw on instead of relying on parents’ interpretation and construction of children’s experiences of repeating a class (Eder & Fingerson, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005)

The researcher entered the data collection phase with no pre-conceived idea and had intended to rely on data to inform the construction of meaning. This resonates with grounded theory,
Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed as an analysis method to understand the experience of young people repeating a class. This analysis approach made it possible to understand the experiences of the participants’ actions from the participants themselves (Charmaz, 2006). This is further supported by Vaismoradi et al (2013) positing that thematic analysis is considered as an independent and reliable qualitative approach to analysis; it identifies common threads across interviews as these themes are not predefined.

The method was chosen because the main objective of the study was to present young people’s lived experiences, views and perspectives of repeating a class in as much detail as possible. Moreover, thematic analysis can be conducted using either the realist or constructionist paradigm. As such, since this study is based on the constructionist paradigm, thematic analysis was then chosen as the preferred method of analysis.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 SAMPLING

Participants were purposefully sampled as the study required participants that had repeated a class in their primary school education. Purposeful sampling often referred to as ‘theoretical sampling’ is preferred because ‘the researcher is seeking incidents of a particular phenomenon that will throw light on a theory which can be used to explain the phenomena’ (Ramenyi, 2014:15). Purposeful sampling is noted to focus on selecting “participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2014:189).
For this particular study purposeful sampling conformed to the requirement of addressing a specific group of young people in primary school who have experienced class repetition, in order to gain an insight into that experience as well as develop a theoretical or functional model from it. Head teachers and class teachers facilitated the process and sampling involved those who met the pre-requisites or set criteria.

3.3.2 SAMPLE TYPES

Participants in the study were primary school pupils in Class Six to Class Seven who had repeated a class in the last five years. These young people were chosen because they were more likely than younger children to be self-reflective about their experiences of repeating a class. Some would have had up to five years since their experience and thus may have been able to explore the impact of the phenomenon on their lives. Recruitment priority was given to schools with high repetition rates and selection of pupils was based on meeting the inclusion criteria below;

- School within Temeke Municipal Council in Dar es Salaam.
- Young people typically thirteen to fourteen years of age (or over)
- Young people who have had to repeat a class in the last five years of their primary school education (on one or more occasion).
- Parents’ consent to young people taking part in the study.
- Parents’ consent to taking part in the study if they consented to having their young people taking part in the study. Participation of both young people and parents, care-giver was to be linked.

3.3.3 SAMPLE SIZE

Sample size for the study was n=19, where 9 young people were interviewed and a total of 10 parents’ interviews were conducted. Sample size is said to depend on the goal or objective of the study (Guest et al, 2006). Guest et al, (2006) further note, “if the goal is to describe a
shared perception, belief or behaviour among a relatively homogenous group, then a sample of twelve is most likely to be sufficient” (2006:76). Participants in this study were a homogenous group, selected based on their similar experience of repeating a class.

However, this homogeneity might be skewed as what is considered to be similar or shared experience may have been experienced differently due to differences in gender, reasons for repeating a class, family background and support among other things. As such, a sample size of 19 participants was selected to offer more variability and credibility to the findings and the model that has been generated.

Where analysis is meant to be grounded into data, there does not seem to be a prescribed sample size as this could be varied depending on when one reaches saturation. Data or theory saturation is reached when there is no additional data, or no new data emerges to produce new codes (Charmaz, 2006; Guest et al, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Remenyi, 2014). However, Charmaz (2006) and Creswell (2014) note that data saturation does not necessarily provide a clear definite number for exact sample size. In their study that involved interviewing sixty women, Guest et al (2006) observed that they reached data saturation by the 12th interview.

### 3.3.4 LOCATION

The study was conducted in Temeke Municipal Council of Dar es Salaam (DSM) region in Tanzania. Tanzania has a total of 30 regions, 25 regions on the Tanzania mainland and 5 in Zanzibar. DSM is the most populous region in the country with 4,364,541 inhabitants (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). The current estimated population of DSM 2017 is 5.782 million as such the region has more primary schools than any other in the country and according to the 2012 Tanzania Population and Housing Census, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for primary school children was at 91% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

DSM has three districts (Municipal Councils); Kinondoni, Ilala and Temeke. Temeke Municipal Council established in 1972 is the largest district of the three and the second most populated after Kinondoni Municipal Council. The Council has 30 administrative wards and
from the population of 1,368,881 inhabitants, 194,595 are children of primary school age who are between the age of 7 – 13 years old. The economic base is mainly industry and trade with 164 big and medium industries and 831 small industries. Despite the presence of industries, Temeke Municipal Council is reported to be DSM’s largest unplanned low-income Municipal Council (UNICEF, 2012).

### 3.3.5 SAMPLE SELECTION

Schools with high incidence of class repetition were sampled randomly following information from the district education office (DEO) on class repetition incidence, location and availability of the participants. Once details of these schools were obtained, three schools were randomly selected; Head Teachers of these schools were contacted, and the ensuing recruitment procedures were applied as detailed below (3.3.6).

Selection of individual young people and their families was similarly randomly drawn from parents’ expression of interest. Their interest in the research was ascertained by participants in the study completing an expression of interest form (see Appendix 7).

### 3.3.6 RECRUITMENT

Since the study required participants who were in school, access to such participants was through head teachers and class teachers who acted as gatekeepers. Below is how the process of recruiting study participants took place:

- A letter, introducing the researcher and briefly describing the nature of study and its purpose was sent to the District Education Officer (DEO) at Temeke Municipal, seeking permission to conduct the study (see Appendix 1). The letter also requested
assistance in gathering information about repetition rates in Temeke District and in recruiting schools.

- Attached to the letter were
  i) University of Bristol introduction letter (see Appendix 2)
  ii) The university of Bristol’s Ethics approval (see Appendix 3)
  iii) Study information leaflet (see Appendix 4)
  iv) Letter to head teachers and parents (see Appendix 5 and 6)

- This request was then directed to the Municipal Education officer who provided the researcher with different folders (from several years) of survey questionnaires (that had not yet been analysed). The researcher then filtered these to identify pupils that met the inclusion criteria.

- Schools that showed high incidences of class repetition were noted and ranked. These were schools from different wards within the Municipal- from these, three wards were randomly selected.

- A list of schools with high incidences of class repetition in each of the selected ward was compiled and three schools were randomly selected from the list of each ward.

- The selected schools were given numbers to identify them and the Education Officer (who had not been involved in the process) was asked to randomly choose three numbers. These became participating schools in the study.

- Once schools were identified, the Education Officer liaised with head teachers of the selected schools to inform them of the researcher’s visit and seek consent for their participation. The District Education Officer thus acted as a gatekeeper between researcher and head teachers.

- Head teachers were provided with introduction letter and information about the research and were given envelopes that contained the various study information documents. These were;
i) Information about the study (general information letter) *(see Appendix 4)*

ii) Study information sheets for both parents and young people *(see Appendix 8 and 9)*

iii) Confidentiality Protocol *(see Appendix 10)*

iv) Expression of interest forms *(see Appendix 7)*

- Once Expression of Interest forms were returned, a random selection of those who had shown interest was made in order to get the required number of participants. Arrangements were made for the researcher to meet with them (pupils and their parents) and go through the Participant Information Sheet and Confidentiality Protocol. The random selection was made clear in the information sheet and given to both pupils and their parents.

- Consent was sought from both parents and young people (participants) prior to any involvement between the participants and the researcher *(see Appendices 11 and 12)*

- Young people’s consent was also sought separately (during home visits and prior to commencement of the interview). Participants were given the flexibility of choosing and deciding the venue where they wanted interviews to be conducted. Interviews with young people were conducted in schools whereas half of the interviews with parents were within their family home and others in at school, train station, in the carpark, at work.

### 3.3.7 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Interviewing was the chosen method of data collection because it can facilitate exploration of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006) and allows the interviewee to talk and discuss what is important to them also enabling the researcher to follow on what has been said to establish a link and eventually theory (Gorra, 2007). Furthermore, it was because rich data was needed to offer an understanding of young people’s experience of having to repeat a class. As rich
data tend to be ‘detailed, focused and full, they reveal participants’ views, feelings, intentions and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives” (Charmaz, 2006:14).

The choice of this particular method of data collection presented young people with a platform to express their own version and construction of phenomena instead of adults ‘assumed’ interpretation as well as describing the phenomena in their own words and the meanings they attach to it (Eder & Fingerson, 2003; Curtin & Clarke, 2005).

Data was obtained from using semi-structured interviews with an aid of interview guide (see appendix 13); which has been noted to help boost researcher’s confidence and enables them to focus on what is being said (Charmaz, 2006).

### 3.3.8 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Data was collected between March 2016 and June 2016. Interviews were conducted with young people and their parents in Kiswahili and all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in sets of two or three with young people and their parents.

An interview guide was used in all interview sets to ensure accuracy and uniformity in gathering data. The interviewing structure was kept consistent to ensure data obtained had adhered to the same process and data saturation was reached inductively (Guest et al, 2006). Throughout the interviewing process, the researcher constantly and continuously compared data to identify emerging themes as well as gaps.

This was to ensure data collection was comparable so as to establish or develop a theme or make improvements for the subsequent interviews (Remenyi, 2014). Furthermore, the comparability helped to avoid using the guide rigidly and ensures flexibility based on what was established in these interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Remenyi, 2014).
All interviews with young people were conducted in young people’s schools. This was young people’s choice of venue as they felt it gave them freedom to speak and share their experience freely, away from their parents. Some parents were interviewed at home while others at their children’s schools and some at their place of work.

All interviews with parents were also audio recorded with participants’ consent. Summary notes of key points were taken during the interviews that were later used as part of member’s check. 5-10 minutes before the end of each interview, researcher ran through what the participant had said, and key points were summarized with the participants to ensure that the topic guide had been covered and to ensure that the researcher had clearly captured participants’ responses.

Recorded interviews were then sent to the transcriber to be transcribed. This transcriber had signed a confidentiality agreement prior to commencing the task of transcribing (see Appendix 14). Interviews were spaced out approximately two to three interviews a week. This was dependent on participants’ availability. This is because fieldwork was carried out during school term-time and young people’s participation was often during their lunch break or after school hours and occasionally on weekends.

Furthermore, the spacing provided time for the recorded interviews to be transcribed and the gaps between addressed while tentatively starting to work on tentative data analysis and reflection. Additionally, this provided the researcher with further opportunities to carry participants’ check of transcribed interviews.

### 3.3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

In Grounded Theory, coding is considered to be the first step of data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Gorra, 2007; Willing, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Remenyi, 2014). In the study the interview transcripts were coded in or at various stages. Coding helps to label and define data which enables the researcher to study, scrutinize and take the data apart in order to form conceptual or theoretical summaries (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Remenyi, 2014).
Coding is part of the theory building process where data is grouped together in order to provide meanings and illuminate what is going on and how to further understand it; (Charmaz, 2006; Remenyi, 2014).

The coding process was started immediately after the first interview and was based on themes emerging: it was specifically based on participants’ words. The method of using interviewees,’ words to create a code is known as ‘in vivo coding’ (Charmaz, 2006; Urquhart, 2012; Remenyi, 2014).

Through coding, emerging and recurring patterns were examined and presented, explored in subsequent interviews with both young people and their parents. NViVo, a computer software was used to assign codes and organise data. Later these codes were used to identify themes before consulting other secondary sources of data to provide input in the discussion phase.

3.4 THE ANALYSIS PROCESS

Codes were identified within transcripts and themes emerged and later developed based on perception and construction of young people’s experience. Ground theory approach in data collection was used where new information was generated (though interviewing) until there was saturation where no new information was gathered.

Tuckett, A. (2005) notes that analysis starts with the literature review to be able to develop research questions. Although literature review was conducted prior to data collection, this was done to look at the general literature on the phenomenon and detailed or specific literature were only consulted during writing-up phase to inform and offer an explanation on the discussion of the findings. No literature was consulted in the analysis process until themes had been identified and developed.

Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is an independent approach that does not depend on theory or epistemology and can thus be applied across a range of
theoretical and epistemological approaches. It is an approach that analyses data by identifying, analysing and reporting patterns that emerge within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79) and can be both inductive and deductive (Vaismoradi, et al 2013).

This was the case for this study where the analysis was inductive since codes were derived directly from interview transcripts; and deductive as themes were subsequently developed from both research questions and based on the frequency of occurring codes and themes from the participants in order to answer research questions.

The process involved:

1. Listening to interview recordings, reading interview transcripts and comparing to audio. Each transcript was audited against the audio recording to ensure all the information had been accurately captured. This made it possible for the researcher to familiarize with the data, make corrections where needed, ensuring efficacy of data, as well a double checking to ascertain data was not lost. This is in line with Tuckett (2005) observations that ‘qualitative data analysis involves careful listening, reading, re-reading…’ of the taped and transcribed text’ (Tuckett, 2005:80)

   Every transcript was then translated, checked and audited against the audio interviews. This process increased clarification, familiarisation and new insights.

2. The information in the interview transcripts was coded according to the emerging themes. This according to Braun and Clarke (2006) is inductive analysis; where data is coded without attempting to fit it into a pre-defined coding frame. Generally, data was coded in vivo where different sentences were coded according to what they represented.

3. The codes were then compared to identify codes with similar meaning and grouped together into categories which had similar messages.

4. The messages were grouped to crystallise themes that seemed to emerge from the participants and those that best reflected the research questions. The systematic manner in which these themes were developed in the study reflects the flexibility of thematic analysis which according to Braun and Clarke (2006) ‘allows you to determine themes in a number of ways’ (2006:83).
"A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question…” and “that researcher judgement is necessary to determine what a theme is” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82). As such, own judgement was used in formulating the four themes that have been presented in the discussion chapter. The themes identified were; PARTICIPATION, SYSTEMS, GENDER and COPING.

- **Participation** as a theme: is based on the prevalence of young people’s responses regarding the process of decision making and how this has had an impact on their overall experience of repeating a class.
- **System** as a theme: the researcher felt the need to explain the wider picture and context of these young people’s lives. That it is their learning experiences, as influenced by various factors, and reported processes of decision making that seemed to focus on specific outcomes.
- **Gender** as a theme: emerged from parents’ responses and views about the gender preference when considering repetition.
- **Coping** as a theme: was developed based on the young people’s response to their experience of repeating a class and how they managed this experience.

### 3.5 ETHICS

Research needs to have ethical committee approval to ensure: no harm comes to research participants as a result of participation in a study; participation is voluntarily, and consent gained and observes confidentiality and participants’ anonymity (Webster et al, 2014). Prior to data collection, the researcher adhered to the University of Bristol ethics procedure in acquiring ethical clearance to conduct the study with young people. Furthermore, the researcher went through the District Education Officer (DEO) to gain permission to conduct the study in the Municipal.

Also, the study ensured that there were a number of stages at which informed consent would be sought. Due to the nature of the participants involved in this study, both verbal and written
consent was sought, and, in every meeting, the researcher asked young people for their consent in participating despite having obtained parental consent.

Consent was sought from head teachers (through recruitment letter) for the study to be conducted in their schools. This also allowed the researcher to use school premises for interviews or meetings with both pupils and their parents. Consent from parents was sought in two aspects; consent for the young people to take part in the study and consent for parents to participate (independent of their children).

Young people were also asked for their consent to taking part in the study separately from their families, to ensure that they were not compelled by their families to participate. Two copies of each consent form were signed by each participant; where one copy was retained by the researcher and the second copy retained by the participant. Consent was also sought from both parents and young people for interviews to be audio recorded and for a third-party person to transcribe them. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcribers’ prior to undertaking the transcribing role to ensure confidentiality of participants’ information was observed.

Information gathered was anonymized, to ensure that the data was not directly linked to the young people or their families. Interview discussions and information shared were confidential and documentation of any form of feedback was the sole property of the researcher and securely stored in accordance to the University of Bristol Data Storage Policy.

Parents and young people were informed about data management protocols that ensured their protection. Although the data was transcribed by a third party, confidentiality was maintained by having a signed confidentiality agreement in place. Also, both parents and teachers were informed how data will be stored according to the university of Bristol Data Storage policy and they were all given details of people to contact if they were not happy, as well as given a cooling off period to withdraw from the study if they chose not to have their data used.
3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

“Reliability and validity are central concepts in any discussion of generalisation as they are concerned with robustness and credibility of research evidence” (Ritchie et al, 2014:354). Validity is concerned with the credibility of the research or study and is attributed to how data or findings are correctly or precisely interpreted and understood (Peräkylä, 2011) and whether the findings reflect accurately what has been studied (Flick, 2014; Ritchie et al, 2014).

3.6.1 RELIABILITY

Reliability is concerned with objectivity of the research, accuracy and replicability (Mason, 2002; Peräkylä, 2011; Flick, 2014; Ritchie et al, 2014). In studies that employ interviewing as a method, reliability is enhanced where these are recorded and transcribed (Creswell, 2013).

Flick (2014) notes that reliability can further be increased by the use of interview guides or by making follow up interviews. In this study, interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide. Tuckett (2005) observed that in social constructionism, knowledge and meaning have multiple constructions based on different interpretations of those involved (2005:76).

The researcher constantly carried out member checking throughout the data collection process by cross-checking and confirming with participants if the information captured is what was said in the interviews. This was an ongoing process that enabled the researcher to explore topics or possible themes that might have emerged during interviews and ensured interview process reached saturation where there was no new information, topic or theme that was produced by the end of the interviewing process, consequently ensuring reliability of findings to the study.

The Time frame of this study is also used as pillar on which to base its reliability. This is based on the principle that data collected is or was true at that particular time of the study.
Replication of this study will thus have to take into account the various confounding factors that might hinder similar or close duplication of findings.

### 3.6.2 VALIDITY

The concern over validity is related to the link made by the researcher between their interpretation of the information gathered from participants and if this reflects participants’ constructions of reality (Flick, 2014); whether the views expressed by interviewees reflect their experience and are factual (Peräkylä, 2011). According to Mason (2002), validity of the interpreted data is dependent on the validity of method. This concern has been addressed or overcome with the involvement of parents in the study to countercheck the information provided.

Although the main objective of the study was to understand the experience of young people repeating a class, parent’s involvement was used to reinforce this understanding through their description of the young person’s experience during the time of their class retention i.e. observations of the parents on their children’s behaviour change if any. As such, interpretation has been geared towards a holistic reflection of data from both young people and their parents, securing the validity of findings as well as conclusions drawn from researcher’s interpretations.

The validity of the study was checked at different stages. During the interviewing process, the concept of members’ check was used as a mechanism of ensuring and validating response captured by the researcher. Member check in this study was only done during interviews, as research design did not allow participants’ involvement post interview phase. This conformed to the credibility and reliability principle as member checking ensured researcher’s interpretation has been drawn and concluded from the data collected.

This is because, from the constructivist’s perspective, reality is not static and therefore, “there is no single reality to be captured in the first place” (Ritchie et al, 2014:355). However, with
extensive documentation of the research process and justification of decisions made at every step, a certain degree of reliability can be achieved.

Creswell suggests several validation strategies of which those applicable to this particular study are discussed here;
(i) Provision of rich, thick, descriptive data (ii) conducting member check, (iii) identifying researcher’s position and clarifying researcher’s bias, (iv) analysis of negative cases, (Creswell, 2013: 251-252).

Ritchie et al (2014) note the need to provide descriptions that reflect ‘language and meanings assigned by participants’ (Ritchie et al, 2014: 357). In this study this particular strategy was used and reflected in the data analysis through coding; where coding was done based on exact words or language participants used. These codes were assigned according to the language used or participants’ constructed meanings.

Confirmation of meaning was constantly sought throughout interviews to ensure that what was captured reflected participants’ meanings thus minimizing distortion and misrepresentation during the coding process. Inherently the reliability of the study went only as far as what participants decided to disclose. As noted by Ritchie et al (2014), “we can never know with certainty that an account is true, because we have no independent and completely reliable access to reality” (Ritchie et al, 2014:359).

The researcher spent the last five to ten minutes going through a summary of what has been discussed to ensure participants’ responses were correctly and succinctly captured. This offers a degree of validity to the interpretations made, as Mason (2002) noted that the challenge in ensuring validity in qualitative studies is also around how valid researcher’s interpretations are.

Another validation strategy noted by Creswell (2013) was clarifying researcher’s bias or position. Although the researcher had done a literature review, data collected was analysed and understood in line with ecological systems and resilience theories that were used as guiding framework to understand how young people construct their experience. As such,
researcher’s interpretation has further been informed and strengthened through use of secondary data and other literatures.

In addition, analysing negative cases has also been noted as a validation strategy where by reporting on negative analysis, the researcher renders the study credible as it is seen as a realistic representation of the event or experience which is reflective of real-life events (Creswell, 2013; Remenyi, 2014). In this study, negative cases were bound to exist since despite the homogeneity of the sample size, data produced may not have necessarily have been homogenous due to various confounding factors. This is demonstrated in the study by the actual quotes of the participants, which has been used extensively in the discussions.

### 3.7 SUMMARY

The above chapter has provided a detailed account of how the research methodology was operationalised. Details on the assumptions of the study have been discussed. The research approach, design and justification have been explained. The various aspect of data sampling has also been explained and selection criteria for the participants demonstrated, and study location described. Finally, the data analysis, ethical considerations, reliability and verification of the data has been discussed
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS

4.1 FINDINGS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

This section presents the findings from interviews with young people. All interviews were conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from March 2016 to June 2016. A total of nine young people (aged between 12year and 16-year-old; of which three were girls and six were boys) participated in semi-structured interviews (see appendix 13).

All nine interviews were conducted at the pupils’ schools and recorded after receiving signed consent from parents and verbal consent from pupils themselves. The recorded interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, (native language) and were translated into English.

Table 3 shows the participating young people’s age, gender, class repeated and class in at the time of the interview.

Table 3: Description of participating young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Age at the time of interview</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Current class</th>
<th>Class repeated</th>
<th>Place of the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR**</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Repeated class 3 times

*Was held two classes behind. From class 4 to class 2.
These findings are presented under three headings.

**Decision making process:** section examines how the decision to retain young people was made, the response of these young people to the decision and how they justified being retained.

**Young people’s experiences:** the stigma of repeating a class and how they managed that experience.

**Preferences:** what young people would have liked to happen reflecting on their experiences. The section concludes with a summing up of the findings gathered from the interviewees.

### 4.1.1 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

This section deals with the overall process of decision making in retaining pupils, i.e.

i) How the decision was arrived at,

ii) Pupils response to the decision taken,

iii) Emphasis on how they felt about the decision and the overall process of decision-making.

The section concludes by presenting young people’s rationalization of their parents’ consent to have them repeat a class.

### 4.1.1.1 How was the decision made?

When conducting interviews with young people, there were often reports of dissent about how a decision to have young people repeat a class was made. This section therefore presents
young people’s reports of how the decision to retain them was made. It also looks at the roles and involvement of teachers, parents and young people themselves in the process of decision-making.

When questioned about how the decision to retain them was made, most of the young people reported that decisions to have them repeat a class was made once the teachers had identified pupils who were struggling. This process involved testing pupils’ ability in either literacy or numeracy by sitting either for exams or asked to do an activity in one or both subjects.

Tests were reported to have been carried out by either class teachers or head teachers. Recalling the process the teacher went through before making the decision to retain pupils, one young person recounted that:

“......... The teacher said, ‘in this class those who can’t read should come forward’. Only 5 pupils came forward, he then asked if the rest could read and they replied yes. He took class 2 books and gave to everyone except us who had come forward. They read and few more were found who couldn’t read”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Literacy- being able to read or write -was used as a measure by teachers to determine progression on to another class and was used as measure to determine who was allowed to take examinations. This was observed when the young person explained the process they went through before sitting for the class 4 examinations:

“...... It’s like this...when pupils are due to sit for class 4 examinations, the head teacher first gets them to read a book, if they know how to read then they sit for the exam”

SU, 15-year-old girl

Reflecting further on examination results as a measure vis a vis a condition for progression to the next class or repeating, another young person recalled what the teacher told them:

“.......... It’s what the Head teacher told us; you fail, you repeat”

MM, 12-year-old boy

As observed from these young people’s responses, the decisions to have them repeat a class were often made following a certain process of classification. When young people were reflecting on the process of making the decision to have them repeat a class, several claimed that the proposals to have them repeat were largely made by teachers. The teachers then advised parents about having their sons or daughters repeat a class.
Young people recounted how their parents were asked to go to school to see either the class teacher or head teacher to discuss the progress they were making and or given the option to have these young people retained. As such, young people believed that the parents’ agreement to retain them was based on advice given by teachers. They further observed that their parents’ agreement to have them retained was based on the belief that teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their children’s learning capability and capacity to progress.

Thus, young people supposed that parents could not oppose or refuse the advice given and tended to agree with teachers to retain them. For example, a young person recounted how he was instructed to bring his mother to school to discuss the possibility of retaining him in class. He noted that:

“When I couldn’t read, I was instructed to bring my parent to school so she can be involved in the decision to have me repeat a class…… My mother was called to school and she agreed to have me retained.”

DR, 14-year-old boy

Reflecting further on teachers’ influence over the decision to have young people repeat class and the involvement of parents in making such decisions; a young person noted how he had proceeded to another class before his teacher spoke to his parent, and reported that:

“Initially, I had started class three, then my teacher spoke to my parent and that’s when I was taken back to class 2”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Another young person reiterated the above sentiments noting that the decision to have her repeat a class was not her parents’, rather

“the teachers called my parent and advised him”

SO, 13-year-old girl

Most of these young people’s deliberations about the decision to have them repeat a class, was that the overall process was agreed between teachers and parents without young people’s involvement. They therefore considered the decision-making process to retain them to have been unfair as their opinions and views were not heard or considered- they indicated that they would have wanted to be involved.
Out of all the young people interviewed, only two claimed to have agreed and chosen to repeat a class on their own accord. The rest stated that the decision to have them repeat a class was agreed between teachers and parents without young people’s knowledge, or involvement. They noted the lack of psychological, emotional and mental support to prepare them for the actual act of being retained. They further stated that they were only told of the outcome of the decision to have them retained either a day before or on the day they were moved to a lower class from their initial prospective classes and required to repeat a class they were previously in. Recalling his lack of involvement in the decision to have him repeat a class, this young person reported:

“To be honest I was not involved, this was just ‘dumped’ on me and was told I would be repeating class as of the next day.... My father accepted the decision of the school without even asking for my opinion”

AB, 16-year-old boy

Most of the young people interviewed tended not to agree with the decision to have them repeat a class; and although they reported to have accepted this as being a decision made in their best interests, they felt the overall process not to have been reasonable. As this young person observed:

“..... it didn’t make sense to retain me over something so trivial, an exercise book! I had no choice but to accept it”

AB, 16-year-old boy

They therefore blamed teachers and parents for retaining them and for not being flexible with the decision. Young people noted that the inflexibility of the decision to have them repeat a class meant that once the decision to retain them had been made they could not do anything other than to accept it. This young person when asked about his response or reaction to the decision to have him repeat a class replied:

“I just had to accept it.... I had already been retained.... what else could I do? ..... How could I change that?... For instance, you have to repeat a class, you try to speak to the teacher and the teacher refuses to understand or change their minds, you then go speak to your parents about it and you get the same response, you don’t have a choice but to accept it .... I had to get used to it and see it as a normal thing”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Another young person further reiterated the above, noting his father’s stance once he had made the decision to have the young person repeat a class:
“My father was very adamant over his decision and that I couldn’t contest, challenge or oppose him....”

AB, 16-year-old boy

The consensus among these young people was that the decision to have them repeat a class did not consider their opinions and concerns on the matter; and despite accepting the reason behind the decision, they felt decisions were made hastily without giving them a chance to improve. They argued the decision to have been sudden and unexpected and to some it even seemed to be a ‘sort of’ punishment.

Furthermore, despite parents being reported as having the final authority on the decision to have their children retained; young people criticized and at times blamed teachers for making the decision to retain them prior to consulting parents and parents for responding to teachers’ advice and suggestions without involving them. This was considered by the majority of these young people to be unjust; as this young person observed:

“this whole situation was an 'unjust' decision taken by the head teacher who was strict and harsh and was quick to retain pupils instead of being friendly and try to understand your problem”

AB, 16-year-old boy

4.1.1.2 Pupils Response to the decision

Several young people interviewed reported to have been disappointed and discouraged by the decision to have them retained. They indicated that this was due to a lack of prior notice or warning about the possibility of repeating a class. These young people further noted that their feelings were exacerbated by being excluded from the decision-making process; and that, on receiving news they were to repeat a class, they felt ‘bad’, angry and hurt. They also attributed their response of feeling ‘bad’ to have been due to the decision to retain them being unexpected. Recounting, how he felt at the prospect of repeating, this young person said:

“........ the day I was told to repeat I felt bad as this was a sudden decision which I did not expect ........ I was really hurt.”

AB, 16-year-old boy
Another young person described how he felt about having to repeat a class and how he reacted to his mother’s decision:

“I felt so bad that I even refused to eat because of her agreeing to have me repeat a class”

DR, 14-year-old boy

These feelings were further stated to be immediately followed by a sense of isolation as they reported initially not to have had friends in the retained classes which made them feel increasingly sad and miserable, as this young person explained:

“I felt bad that those that I was familiar with, my friends that I played together with had moved up, I felt bad, I felt alone, sad and miserable”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Young people appeared to avoid discussing the impact of their parents’ consent to have them repeat a class. During the interviews most of them reported to have been angry at their parents for agreeing to have them retained, especially without seeking young people’s views and opinion. When asked why he was angry at his mother and the decision to have him repeat a class, this young person explained:

“My mother was called to school, .... she came and spoke to the teacher, .... agreed to have me retained and then left .... I was very angry! ..... I did not want or like to go back as I had already progressed!”

DR, 14-year-old boy

Young people felt angry at being excluded from the process of making the decision to retain them and at how news of having to repeat a class was delivered because they thought that other options could have been tried first. As such they felt powerless to challenge the decision made and reported to have accepted it with a sense of helplessness. They did not feel they could disclose how they felt to their parents for the reason that these feelings would not change the outcome, or the decision already made. One young person further argued that he did not feel the need to disclose his feelings due to his gender; he stated that:

“I didn’t show my despondency....... Because I am a boy, a male child....... well because there was no point as repetition was already happening”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Despite many young people reporting being unhappy with the decision to have them repeat a class, one young person reported to have taken the news of the decision to have her repeat a class positively, due to the perceived benefits she believed repeating a class would have
produced. Recalling her reaction and feelings over the decision to retain her at the time, she said:

“I took it well because I learnt a lot include reading and writing”

MR, 14-year-old girl

4.1.1.3 Young people’s justification of parents’ decision

Even though young people stated that they were not happy with either the process or the decision of repeating a class, the majority of them reported not being able to challenge or question the decision made by teachers or their parent’s consent to the decision. This was irrespective of whose decision it was to retain them; whether the school (teachers) or parents. Some of them equally observed that they were still unable to discuss the matter with their parents even long after having been through the experience of repeating a class; as this young person observed:

“….. I’ve never asked…in fact, I can’t question an adult…. I don’t know but I just can’t ask why she had, let me be retained”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Most of them reported to have agreed and accepted the decision to have them repeat a class without questioning it, as their parents had the final say. These young people further reported not wanting to be disrespectful by challenging their parents over the decision made to retain them; hence they had to accept their parents’ decision. They rationalized that their parents are their guardians and as such cannot be opposed. For example, when one young person was asked why she did not question her parent’s decision to have her retained; she responded:

“….. because you cannot challenge, oppose parent’s decision”

SO, 13-year-old girl

The justification these young people gave was that parents and teachers knew best and any decision they made was in young people’s interests. These justifications were reported by young people to have been based on the perceived outcome of repeating a class and how the decision made helped young people address the difficulties they were facing at the time and their eventual success in terms of performance or promotion to the next class. Despite these perceived outcomes, young people were not keen to relive or examine questions about the
process of repeating a class or parents’ decision on repeating a class. They did not want to think about this or explore what might have been the possible outcome had they been able to challenge the decision to retain them. Instead, some responded arguing that the decision was made to help them, as this young person pondered:

“wasn’t it because they wanted to help me?”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Another young person offered justification for his parent’s decision disregarding his feelings based on the outcome of repeating a class. He argued that:

“……. because when one is retained for not being able to read, when you are then able to read you can’t hate them because they would have retained you so as you can learn and be able to grasp better”

KS, 13-year-old boy

The same young person rather than question or challenge his parent, reported to have confided in his friend of how he felt about his parents’ agreement to retain him. His friend’s response was to also justify parent’s consent as being in the best interest of the young person. This was captured in his recount:

“...I once confided only in my friend but he told me that it’s not like my parents were angry at me but because I’ve been doing poorly and my parents did that so as to give me the chance to understand what is happening at that time and in the future”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Furthermore, some young people believed that it was futile to challenge their parents’ consent to have them retained. This was observed to have been due to the power imbalance between young people, teachers and their parents; as this young person observed when exploring the relationship between him, his teachers and parents. He claimed that:

“there is nothing I would have done, I would have repeated because I couldn't challenge or go against my parents' decision it's not right; even my teachers', challenging or going against them would be hard. It’s because they guide me and they are grown-ups. If the teacher refuses to teach, that's it .... and the parents refuse to look after you (take care of you), that's it .... so, you can’t challenge or go against these two people”

MM, 12-year-old boy
4.1.2 YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF REPEATING A CLASS

This section reports young people’s experiences when they were repeating a class. The experiences are based on their personal encounters of repeating a class and their reactions. Key issues identified in their experience were; being laughed at and being labelled; how they felt when they were going through their experience and when interacting with their peers; their struggles with friendships and having to work harder. The section will conclude by presenting reports of how young people managed these experiences when repeating a class.

4.1.2.1 Being laughed at and being labelled

In this study, approximately half of the young people interviewed reported being laughed at by old or new friends or classmates, i.e. encountering negative reactions because of repeating a class. This occurred within individual classes and the wider school, irrespective of whether it was the young people’s decision to repeat a class, or the decision was their parents’ or teachers’.

The negative reactions from peers and friends were reported to have been in the form of laughter, ridicule and being called names as this young person recounted:

“…. I didn’t like the word they used to use when teasing me…. They used to boo saying I am an idiot, stupid I have repeated, they will finish school and leave me behind aging, getting old in school...”

DR, 14-year-old boy

Even in the absence of direct experience, negative reactions were anticipated by young people, who reported fear if they were to be retained for a second time as this young person stated:

“...at the moment if I repeat again I will be seen as not intelligent, smart... dull”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Another observation that young people made regarding their experience of repeating a class; was having a label attached to them. They noted that they were referred to and identified as
those that had repeated despite having moved classes. This was observed in the comment this young person made that

“…. whenever people saw me they used to say in passing that this guy has repeated”

KS, 13-year-old boy

The experience of being laughed at or labelled due to repeating a class was thought to be minimized if the young person was to repeat a class in another school where they were not known. This was considered as an option since it would have offered those repeating anonymity from their new classmates and peers.

Despite reports of being laughed at and for others fearing or anticipating being laughed at and labelled; not every young person experienced this. According to one young person, she reported not having experienced being laughed at as she was new in the school and thus, was not known enough for the others to be aware of her status that she had repeated.

The anonymity enabled her not to experience such challenges whilst being aware this would or could have happened had she been known or stayed in her former school. This was further echoed by another young person who felt that it was better to be moved to another school instead of having to repeat a class, even if this meant losing friends as he professed:

“…..better to move school……I could have still been able to see them (friends) when they are coming back from school, on their way home …. If I moved school, I would have made other, new friends there”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Moving school was thought and seen to be an immediate response to counter being laughed at or labelled when repeating a class but the same young person above noted the consequences to his preferred option on his friendships. He reflected on the prospect of losing old friends and their comradeship and noted:

“It is better to repeat here you see them, rather than being transferred where you lose them permanently though by doing so means progressing”

MMH, 15-year-old boy
4.1.2.2 Feelings

When asked how young people felt about repeating a class, most of them reported feelings such as being sad, ashamed, upset and angry. Sadness was reported as being due to loss of friends and being retained instead of proceeding to the next class and was further reported to have been exacerbated by seeing their peers proceed while they stayed behind; as one young person observed when asked how he felt when he was repeating a class:

“I felt bad, I felt alone and sad, miserable!”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Repeating a class was also reported to have made some young people feel alone. This feeling might be short-lived as one young person explained:

“I was all alone, I didn’t have friends….. after a while I made some …”

MMH, 15-year-old boy

Most young people interviewed felt that their experiences of repeating a class would have been different and less painful had they been with their original classmates, peers or friends at the time they were repeating a class. For this reason, the impact of repeating a class is reported to have been greater due to friendship breakdown - that any challenges faced at the time could have been managed with friends’ support. Recalling his experience of repeating and how he managed the challenges, one young person described:

“I felt so bad but they used to come visit me in the afternoons…. they gave me company, helping me with loneliness and sometimes they used to help me with aspects I would be struggling with”

KS, 13-year-old boy

In some cases, physical differences induced a feeling of exclusion. Some retained young people found themselves the oldest or tallest in the class as reported by this young person:

“Yes, I felt it, …. because some of the kids were short and I was the tallest in class. I looked old and odd in the class…… I felt low, sad and I used to be alone on my own”

AB, 16-year-old boy
4.1.2.3 Friendship struggles and maintenance

In the learning environment away from home, for these young people, friendship and companionship seemed to be of great importance - in both schooling experience and social interactions. As such, when reporting and reflecting on their experiences of repeating a class peer acceptance, understanding and sympathy was considered important to these young people, in terms of enabling them to accept and deal with repeating a class. The stress of losing old friends, having to make new friends and deal with being labelled as someone who is repeating a class was reported as being stressful as this young person explained:

“I didn’t feel well, ok …. because my friends had already finished. I was left alone behind, I cried”

SU, 15-year-old girl

The loss of friends was reported to minimize the opportunity to share various experiences, both personal and academic with peers. Describing the impact of repeating a class on the loss of his friends and comradeship, one young person explained:

“we had been so used to each other that after classes we would sit together and have group discussions, talk about our families, exchange information…so when I had to repeat, this stopped………..”

AB, 16-year-old boy

There was also an element of comparison between new and old friends as young people reported having two sets of friends after repeating a class; those from their previous classes and those in their new, retained classes. Making comparison of both his old and new friends, a young person observed that:

“…. They accepted me whole heartedly though not like the ones I was with before that I had been used to”

AB, 16-year-old boy

Retaining old friends was also important to young people and repeating a class had a significant impact on this aspect of their lives. The responses from the young people varied from the reasons to retain friends in the previous classes to challenges in establishing new friends in the new classes. Some of the coping mechanisms to maintain existing friendships were reported to include making time during breaks when in school and after school, as reported in the two extracts below;
“We are together during break time (with old friends), they would have their writing exercises but when the bell rang (to signal end of break), we would each go to our respective classes”.

SU, 15-year-old girl

Reiterating the above observation, another young person further commented:

“….. we could only do this after school on our way home among those that used the same route home or were neighbours”

AB, 16-year-old boy

In some cases, friendships were reported to have been maintained for a period until retained young people had established or formed friendships with their new peers in the classes they were retained in. Expanding on this, one young person for example explained:

“…….once I had made friends in my retained class, I considered them as my closest friends…”

SU, 15-year-old girl

Another young person further elaborated on the nature of his friendships with his old peers, and friends; noting that he stopped being close to them and:

“.... wasn't hanging out’ with them or being that close to them!”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Also, class unfamiliarity was reported to have been a challenge that young people experienced when they were repeating a class. This was reported to have been due to difficulties fitting in classes they were retained in as they were not familiar with their new class mates and sometimes teachers.

For these young people, they believed that being familiar with their class would have facilitated learning, fitting in and not being isolated or feeling alone. The majority of the interviewed young people argued that class unfamiliarity and not being able to make friends contributed to their feelings of loneliness and isolation. Furthermore, class unfamiliarity was reported to have hindered friendship formation for the retained young people which then impacted on the time taken to settle in.

One young person attributed his feelings to class unfamiliarity. When he was asked why he reported being hurt when repeating a class, he responded that:

“...because you are not familiar and not used to new classmates, those you are used to are in a class ahead of you....”
Making further correlation between class unfamiliarity and loss of friends when repeating a class, another young person reported that:

“......when they took me back, I wasn’t familiar or friends with those I found in that class.... when I get used to them I will be happy, but it wouldn’t be like those I would have known before because those before used to help me. These new ones, would take me time to get used to them”

In addition, several young people reported that a lack of familiarity with their new teachers and for some, just being new in a school been a challenge to them. They said that, when struggling, they were unable to seek help from both their teachers and their colleagues in the class. Some young people also reported that their new class mates were unsympathetic.

They attributed this to unfamiliarity with each other and with the new classmates seeing those repeating a class as academically weak and thus being unsympathetic towards them. Due to this unfamiliarity, those repeating a class reported to have been reluctant to seek or solicit help as they feared being ostracized, laughed at or seen as not being smart or intelligent.

Retained young people attributed this kind of response to their new classmates’ inexperience of repeating a class; as this young person noted:

“I was not, hadn’t been used to.... Those that haven’t repeated are the ones that see you as not being smart, intelligent”

4.1.2.4 Having to work harder

Another reported experience of repeating a class was having to work hard to change and proceed to the next class. As retained pupils, young people described having to work harder in class to perform better as they were expected to know or be familiar with what was being taught since they were repeating things they already learned in the previous year. Their need to work hard was to prove to their peers and new classmates that they had changed as well as work hard to avoid failing and being retained again.
Young people observed that they needed to pay more attention and concentrate more than their peers in their retained classes. They considered working hard and making changes as being their response to repeating a class. These called for extra teaching hours, and the young people had to enrol for extra tutorials. This meant being able or required to balance various learning schedules for tuitions\textsuperscript{4} and Madrasa\textsuperscript{5} as well as their normal school schedule.

Most of the young people interviewed reported to have been attending Madrasa and tuitions both in addition to their normal schooling; where attendance for Madrasa and tuitions was after normal school hours. One young person described how hard he had to work to balance the different learning schedules:

“I used to go every day, when I come back from school I go home to eat, then go for tuition to learn when I get back home from tuition I go to Madrasa……. You have to go to tuition and be, do like what the other are doing. So I had to work hard in everything I had to do………..”

\textit{KS, 13-year-old boy}

Almost every young person spoken to during the interviews had to balance these learning schedules at one point, while at the same time being under pressure to perform better in order to proceed to the next class.

They were in constant fear of failing as this would have meant being retained further, but also being reprimanded by either their teachers or parents. On having to work hard, one young person admitted having done so to get his father’s appreciation; as he explained:

“...at the moment, my stand is on concentrating on my studies and work more harder on the class I am currently in so as even later my performance and overall results would be satisfactory so that even my dad won’t have a go at me instead commend, congratulate me”

\textit{MS, 13-year-old boy}

However, working harder was not only reserved for subjects or areas young people had been struggling with, as one young person elucidated:

\textsuperscript{4} These are extra tutoring classes outside school hours that parents pay to have their children enrolled to avail them with the extra tutoring help. They are often run after school hours and on weekends.

\textsuperscript{5} These are religious classes that Muslim children attend to learn Quran and Islamic teachings. Lessons are in Arabic where children are expected to be able to recite Quran passages. These classes for school aged children in Tanzania tend to run in the evening after school.
“I had to work hard in everything I had to do... I did put more efforts in my studies and worked hard so that I could also proceed, being promoted”

KS, 13-year-old boy

4.1.2.5 Additional learning

Young people that were attending Madrasa and tuitions reported to have had the need to balance their learning and avoid confusing the different learnings and syllabuses they were undergoing on an almost daily basis. They reported finding this challenging as they feared confusing what they were taught; as this young person explained:

“........Here at school, you learn things at school and when you go there (Madrasa) it’s like you are doing two things at once, mixing things; ... when a teacher is teaching you might find yourself answering something completely different from what has been taught”

MR, 14-year-old girl

There were also reports of young people having to consciously switch between different learning schedules despite their reports of both schools and tuitions using similar syllabus and language of instruction. Recounting the struggle of managing various additional learning, this young person said:

“I felt I shouldn’t ‘mix’ tuition and school studies as these are two different things. Because if I was in class 4 and attended tuition for class 3 topics that I had missed, I would be confusing myself”

MM, 12-year-old boy

Also, young people that attended Madrasa claimed that Madrasa’s teaching style differs from that of school. As such, they reported to have managed to learn in Madrasa without any problems despite struggling in school. They attributed this to the difference in teaching styles between Madrasa and school as this young person observed:

“........In Madrasa, we don’t learn the same way as we do in school, in school its different. In Madrasa, everyone has his or her own book, Juzu which we take with us home ....”

MM, 12-year-old boy
To assist with the challenges of repeating a class most of the young people interviewed were going for extra private tuition to help boost their learning. Retained young people reported to have found teaching styles in tuitions effective in promoting their understanding and facilitating their learning.

In tuition, young people also reported to have been taught topics or subjects ahead of what was and is being taught in class.

They observed this to have given them the upper hand when the topic is later covered in class. They argued this to be like doing revision and therefore giving them a chance to understand better. Furthermore, these young people reported to have found tuition to be helpful and effective because they argued it offered a different approach to the way lessons were or are delivered in schools.

They further attributed the effectiveness of tuitions to class sizes; stating that learning and understanding in tuition was effective as it was not crowded and that it offered a better learning environment, as this young person expounded:

“...Because there is a calmer, quiet environment that promotes learning...there are no noises such as these, you can even understand Mathematics easily ....... One has plenty of time to revise, self-study and there is only one teacher unlike school where there are several teachers coming in and out of class and, also in tuition there is no subject timetable, you can sit there learn or self-study and grasp, understand”

MS, 13-year-old boy

Also, tuition success was further attributed to tuition teachers and their teaching style or technique as noted by this young person:

“When I go for tuition I understand, grasp because teachers there use a lot of efforts, they teach, instruct well”

SU, 15-year-old girl

4.1.2.6 Managing the experience of repeating a class
Some of the coping mechanisms that the young people adopted to deal with the situation included: acceptance, as reported by SU, 15-year-old girl; silence, as reported by AB 16-year-old boy; isolation and avoidance, as reported by MS 13-year-old boy. How they did this varied from person to person. Some reported this to their teachers or parents and others actively and consciously avoiding interactions or encounters with those that were laughing at them.

Young people’s responses reflecting how they managed challenges and experiences of repeating a class included avoiding interaction, as this young person reported:

“...sometimes I couldn’t even go out for my break at break time because of being laughed at....”

MS, 13-year-old boy

Another young person, when recounting her experience of being laughed at, reported to have sought parents’ help in managing and dealing with the experience; explaining that:

“I told my father that people were laughing at me for repeating a class, he advised me to ignore them and do what I am there to do. So, whenever I came to school, if they laughed I wouldn’t bother, I ignored them.... I just stuck to my parent’s advice that I shouldn’t be bothered with them even if they laugh at me, I should ignore and leave them to laugh because they don’t know that one can’t proceed to another class without being able to master the previous one ......”

SO, 13-year-old girl

In dealing with the various challenges faced and the overall experience of repeating a class, young people reported that they received practical, emotional and psychological support largely from their friends. One young person recounted how he managed due to the encouragement he received from his friends:

“I am currently ok because we help each other, they help me.......... They used to tell me, keep heart you will succeed, manage”

KS, 13-year-old boy

Another young person acknowledged friends’ practical support in learning, stating that:

“My friends used to help me read.... They used to teach me”

SU, 15-year-old girl
4.1.3 WHAT WOULD YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE LIKED TO SEE HAPPEN?

4.1.3.1 What worked well

Most of the young people interviewed reported to have been thankful for being retained despite their reports of initial disagreement and discontent over the decision to repeat class. They attributed the change in perspective to the observed benefits that are based on the outcomes of their repeating a class. Most of them related their experience to their improved ability in areas and aspects they were initially struggling with, as this young person noted:

“…. the benefits were there like understanding the subjects better unlike before when I couldn’t grasp clearly”

*MS, 13-year-old boy*

Another young person made a general observation about the benefits of repeating a class, that:

“…. mostly it’s about getting knowledge and understanding in matters, things that one was struggling with”

*KS, 13-year-old boy*

On reflection, some noted that given their cases, nothing could have been of help other than being retained, which helped them improve their learning experience as one young person stated:

“……Had I proceeded I would have had a bigger problem; when they held me back at least my problems started being resolved because I got a good teacher in the class I was retained in and this teacher taught me until I was able to understand”

*DR, 14-year-old boy*

Another young person reiterated the importance of repeating a class, alleging that no other intervention would have helped him to learn. Rather, this young person believed repeating a class to have been the only solution as he explained:

“…… I didn’t think there could be anyone who could have taught me until I understood all the Mathematics problems I was struggling with initially to the point of me understanding and mastering them”

*MS, 13-year-old boy*

Some of the young people retained, observed other benefits that accrued to being held longer in school. When considering the significance given to friendship and comradeship among
these retained young people, some of them reported the benefits of repeating a class by comparing their experiences to that of their promoted friends benefits unrelated to academic performance or grade improvements.

Rather, they reported the benefits of repeating a class as helping to keep young people away from the streets, ‘mtaani’⁶ and for girls, the prevention of early marriages and pregnancies. This was an observation that some young people made in comparison to their promoted friends who eventually either dropped out of school due to peer influence or became pregnant or got married.

One young person for example, reflected on his experience and how repeating a class had helped to keep him off the streets:

“…. If I had not repeated a class I would have been in the streets like them wondering, loitering around……, because they are my friends and most of them we live in the same street, some are motorcycle drivers, some are now bus conductors as for girls some have given birth”

⁶ In this context, this meant being off the street; not being a delinquent or being involved in anti-social behaviour or be a school drop-out.

4.1.3.2 What would they want different

Although the above observations point to the various benefits of repeating a class, that can be seen to be multifaceted. Most of the young people when asked if they would readily repeat a class again if required, strongly opposed the idea. Only one young person seemed to be willing to go through this experience again if need be.

Having been through the experience, young people felt other interventions could have been used to help those who were struggling instead of retaining them. They suggested various approaches such as; issuance of warning, give struggling pupils special assistance, involve
young people in the decision-making process and allowing young people to proceed to the next class under set conditions.

4.1.3.2.1 Issuance of warning

Young people reported to have felt that decisions to repeat class were made in haste and unexpectedly. They alleged not to have been given sufficient warning. As such, they suggested that teachers should give pupils warnings before deciding to have them repeat a class.

This, they believe would give young people a chance to make improvements in areas where they are struggling, as well as mentally preparing them for the prospect of repeating a class. They argued that being given prior warning would alert them to the need to work harder and improve, urged by knowledge of the consequences should they fail to achieve or accomplish the necessary standards.

They noted that, had they been given this warning they could have worked harder to improve; and that the unexpectedness of the decision to retain them contributed to the difficulties they experienced when they were repeating a class. One young person further advised that the said warning should be given for a specific period giving young people the opportunity to change or improve before making the decision to retain them.

4.1.3.2.2 Special assistance given to struggling pupils

The common opinion among these young people was that different approaches to help struggling pupils at various stages should be used to promote learning and understanding which inherently would also help in avoiding or preventing the retention of pupils. They argued that extra teaching should be given to struggling children either as an alternative or as an intervention before deciding to have pupils repeat a class.
The young people in the study argued that the retention of pupils as an intervention should be employed as a last resort only after different approaches have failed to yield the desired outcomes. They argued that some of the factors that contributed to pupils repeating a class were beyond their control, such as teaching style and teachers’ commitment at school. Also, there was a call for both teachers and parents to consider the impact of their decision to have pupils repeat classes.

Young people proposed that parents, school teachers and private tuition teachers do their part in offering the extra support needed to help the young person in their learning. Reiterating this, one young person proposed:

“All…. What is to be done, they should be taught, the parents should buy them books, others should be given tuition here at school and at home, I believe if they are in tuition they will be taught more deeply, because in normal classes there are so many students such; the teacher cannot reach each student individually, and if he reaches them not all of them will understand”

DR, 14-year-old boy

4.1.3.2.3 Young people’s involvement in decision-making

Among all the young people interviewed, only two reported to have repeated a class voluntarily. They stated that repeating a class had been their choice and decision based on their self-assessment of performance and how far behind they felt they were. They seemed to view this as the only alternative available to them to improve their performance. McGrath (2007) argues that this maybe the case as parents and students erroneously assume that, a teacher working with a student who has repeated manages that students learning in a special way, or that additional support is provided to a student that has repeated.

Young people called for an increased involvement in decision making. They argued that this would have given them a platform to suggest ways to help them even where repeating a class was inevitable.
4.1.3.2.4 Conditional class promotion

Some of these young people further argued that they should or could have been promoted to the next class subject to attending tuition. They acknowledged to have been struggling with either their literacy or numeracy skills and falling behind in their learning but felt they should have been promoted with their peers while at the same time receiving extra lessons to help them where they were struggling or falling behind. This is an option or intervention that more than three quarters of these young people thought could have been explored when the decision to retain them was being made.

They noted that, had they been involved in the process of making the decision to retain them or had their views been sought, they could have suggested this option as opposed to repeating the whole year. They argued that, based on the support and assistance they received from their friends and from tutoring, they could have proceeded to another class while re-sitting failed exams and receiving help and support in the areas where they were struggling.

They observed that the teaching approach during private tuitions promoted better understanding. One young person believed that there was no need to retain her because she could have attended tuition; as she explained:

“When I go for tuition I understand and grasp because teachers there use a lot of efforts, they teach, instruct well”

SU, 15-year-old girl

This however, was not the majority’s consensus. Not every young person agreed to the notion of class promotion subject to tuition attendance. One young person observed that it would have been difficult to manage and balance what was being taught in the promoted class while at the same time trying to catch up on subjects he was struggling with in the previous class; as he observed:

“…. cannot mix the syllabus of two classes at the same time and make it”

MM, 12-year-old boy
4.1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As observed from the presentation of findings, young people’s reports centred mainly on the decision and reasons to have them retained. They did not feel either of the two to be justifiable however they did not at the time voice their disagreement or challenge the decision to have them repeat a class.

For these young people, the impact of repeating a class was largely reported to have been the loss and maintenance of friendship. This loss had a significant role in their experience of repeating a class as well as in managing the challenges they experienced as a result of repeating a class. They reported being laughed at by their friends and peers but at the same time drew support and encouragement from them. As such, their reports about response and feelings towards repeating a class are mostly around issues of friendships.

When reflecting on their overall experience and the decision to have them repeat a class; they reported to have been hurt, lonely, sad, and isolated while at the same time justifying their parents’ decisions to have them repeat a class and reporting these decisions to have been in their best interests. They however, noted that they would have preferred to have been involved in the decision-making process or given warning of the possibility of being retained.
4.2 FINDINGS FROM PARENTS

This section presents findings from interviews conducted with parents of young people who had repeated class in their primary school education in the Temeke District of Tanzania. A total of eleven participants; eight parents and three guardians were interviewed, three men and eight women as presented in the table below.

Table 4: Description of participating parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>occupation</th>
<th>child</th>
<th>age of the child years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Taxi Driver</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>MMH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>SO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>MM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Guardian 1</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Welding Mechanic</td>
<td>SU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Guardian 2</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>House wife</td>
<td>SU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Guardian</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>DR</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were of mixed marital status five were married, three separated and one single. Of those married, interviews were conducted with one parent–of which two interviews were with the fathers and two with the mothers. The fifth interview was with a married couple who were guardians. These were the young person’s sister and brother-in-law.

Three interviews were with mothers that had separated from their husbands or partners. Two interviews were with the young person’s mother and grandmother who is the main guardian.
The livelihood activities of the participants are largely small and medium scale businesses and, or informal labour such as household, domestic work.

Four of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes, four interviews were conducted at young people’s schools, one interview at a train station during parent’s lunch break and another interview was conducted in the car outside the parent’s place of work.

Parents’ responses from these interviews were noted and clustered into four categories:  
**Category one**: parents’ views and perception of class repetition; their role in decision making and what they considered or attributed to having been the causal factors for their children repeating a class; and their response to the decision and the practice of retaining pupils.

**Category two**: the management of class repetition, parents’ observations and reports about awareness or unawareness of how they dealt and managed challenges that young people experienced when repeating a class and the support offered.

**Category three**: the impact of repeating a class and their observations on the benefits of having their children repeat a class.

**Category Four**: mitigation of class repetition, the parents’ advice and recommendation based on their experiences of their children repeating class and with a reflection on the support and suggested alternative to repeating a class.

**4.2.1 CAUSAL FACTORS OF CLASS REPETITION**

When asked to reflect on the overall experience of having their children repeat a class, parents and guardians made several observations that revolved around causal factors to repeating a class, their reflection in relation to their decision as well as in relation to the young people’s feelings.
Most of these parents and guardians attributed repeating a class to ‘michezo mingi’ a term that translates to mean playing too much or too much play. They considered this to be a result of overcrowding, where a teacher has too many pupils for personalized attention.

Parents noted that in such circumstances it is difficult for teachers to manage the class and reach every individual child to ensure effective learning. Based on his experience as a school governor, one parent observed that:

“.... when the teacher is teaching, it is not easy to know which pupil has attended or not attended, or even to monitor the progress of the whole class...... My experience as a parent and a member of the school committee, it is true teachers were not teaching or even making follow ups on pupils’ progress. We asked them about this, they said the pupils were overwhelmingly many in class rooms such that it was difficult to teach all of them and expect them to understand. You find about 70% of the pupils are truants....”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

Another parent affirmed the above two causal factors; class size and too much play, noting how she reminded her son to be attentive when in class. She explained that:

“When he comes home you tell him to stop playing and to be careful and listen to the teacher, don’t ask others what did the teacher say? maybe the person you are asking didn’t understand and you end up misleading each other.... You tell him to be diligent when the teacher is teaching to be careful and listen... It’s a known fact our schools are overcrowded”

Parent of MM, 12-year-old boy

It was also felt that young people’s families, surroundings and neighbouring environment have an influence on their learning and performance especially where there is lack of, or poor monitoring. One parent for example explained that:

“....at home, there are his uncles and aunts, but they are very busy with their work, and our mom is now getting old its tiring for her to be chasing or making follow ups on grandchildren. His grandfather used to help him more when he was alive”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

Furthermore, young people’s surroundings or neighbourhoods were reported to have an auxiliary influence on young people’s behaviour, their learning and education attainment. For example, one parent described how their surroundings had an influence on his son, stating that:
“...... my son has grown up in local surroundings and has involved himself in groups that are not helpful or of benefit to him......local area or surroundings, I mean ‘unruly’ environment where a lot of time is wasted on gaming instead of education......but upon my monitoring and discussion with his teachers, they advised me to move him to a different school as they felt he was hard working but that there were circumstances or factors in his surrounding that was causing him to fall behind and observed behavioural change .......”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

Another parent linking young people’s environment to repeating a class, reported that parental conflict, family background or circumstance played a role in her daughter’s repeating a class, noting that:

“.....Generally, its due to my failed marriage and our separation, that led to the child living in an environment where there was no education or academic monitoring...... had it not been that, she would have been finishing her primary education”

Parent of MR, 14-year-old girl

4.2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF CLASS REPETITION

The parents’ interviews showed mixed perception about the effect of class repetition. Those sharing positive perceptions had observed positive changes in their children, which were both academic and social. Academic changes reported were improved performance in class as well as increased motivation. Young people were able to pass examinations and be promoted to the next class hence improving confidence and self-esteem.

Social changes noted by parents were children becoming more responsible and spending their time in a constructive manner. Repeating a class was seen as a way of reducing some risk behaviours such as joining delinquent groups due to peer pressure.

However, there were also parents who thought that repetition had negative effect such as increased financial burden on the parents through extra tuition. According to another parent,
repeating a class made it necessary for the parent to be extra vigilant in monitoring the young person and supervise his progress to prevent further retention or in some cases truancy.

These were general reported perceptions of parents on class repetition. However, some parents had very strong views on the role of gender in class repetition. Therefore, this section examines in detail parents’ gender perception in relation to young people repeating a class, plus other reported and observed causal factors that contribute or play a role in having children repeat a class. The parental role in making the decision to have young people repeat classes will also be examined.

4.2.2.1 Gender based perceptions

The views of most of the interviewed parents and guardians on repeating a class seemed to be further influenced by gender. Gender was considered with regards to personal beliefs and general societal perception. The consensus was that repeating a class for boys was not as impactful as for girls. They argued this to be because girls were perceived to mature and reach puberty faster or sooner than boys as this parent observed:

“…. A girl will get old in the process of repeating because girls grow quickly”

Parent of KS, 13-year-old boy

There were also fears of girls likely to get pregnant while in school with parents further reporting that, this may also lead to girls eventually dropping out of school. When challenged about this view, one parent noted that:

“The issue here is that a boy does not bear children, a girl does. So, when a girl is retained she may not finish her education due to falling pregnant while still in school”

Parent of MM, 12-year-old boy

Furthermore, gender-based arguments with regards to the role of girls in society was also considered as a reason not to retain them. These parents were of the common opinion that it is better to retain boys and let girls finish their primary school education regardless of their ability or inability since they may end up getting married. One parent noted that traditions and cultural practices played a part in this where:
“…. a girl stays home, in the house, even when the mother travels or goes on errands, you are assured there is a girl in the house to cook”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

This parent further observed the justification not to retain girls as:

“being the pride of seeing children finishing class seven ‘untainted’ without being concerned if they got proper education; because for a girl, you expect someone will come along and marry her, that’s when you will know that her life is sorted”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

4.2.3 PARENTAL ROLE IN DECISIONS TO RETAIN CHILDREN IN A CLASS

Despite the above observations, parents reflected that they would make the same decision or consent to have their children repeat class, as this parent noted:

“……. if I am not satisfied, I will have him retained. What’s wrong with retention? If I feel or see they are not doing well or satisfied then I will retain them so that they feel the impact, the hurt, and pain”

Parent of KS, 13-year-old boy

Parents further stated that their decision to consent to their children repeating a class was final and believed that, young people’s experience of being laughed at motivates them to work hard. According to one parent, this experience is necessary to enable the young person to learn, he noted:

“…Yes, what I want is for her to understand and do well in class, the more they laugh at her the more she sees it as a challenge and she work hard, so that they will stop laughing at her…… why would I ask her, what's the point? Once I have made my decision as a parent, she must accept, agree!”

Parent of SO, 13-year-old girl

4.2.4 MANAGEMENT OF CLASS REPETITION
This part reports on the parental and family support provided to the young people when they were repeating a class and whether this addressed or helped them to cope with any challenges or difficulties they were experiencing. The section presents parental support offered based on parents’ awareness or unawareness of the challenges young person experienced or encountered. The findings have been categorized as follows:

i) Responses and handling of news of repetition.
ii) Parents’ awareness of young people’s experience.
iii) Managing young people’s experiences.
iv) Provision of extra tuition.

4.2.4.1 Response and handling of news of repeating a class

News about repeating a class had been received with mixed reactions; parents and guardians expressing either positive or negative feelings. There was also a general feeling of helpless acceptance to the provision of information that a young person was to be retained.

Parents in support of repeating a class reported receiving the news of their children repeating a class positively. They were of the view that repeating a class acted as a constant reminder to the young people of the much-needed changes or improvements in their learning and reported to have supported young people in accepting the news of having to repeat a class. Below is a description from a guardian on how he responded to being told of repetition:

“After getting the letter and reading it, I called her and told her to read it for me, by so doing the message will be delivered to her and tell her that you have failed and I have been called at the school to discuss this issue, whether to let you proceed or to take you back to the same class. I start there to counsel her, advising her to repeat the class, that repeating will help her perform better, I will give her the benefit of repeating as going through the same things which will make her master them better, and be in a better position in the year ahead. My advice there will be creating the environment for her to accept repeating whole heartedly”
Guardian 1 of SU, 15-year-old girl

There were also non-committal responses from parents who expressed they had accepted the news helplessly— they felt ‘bad’ about the young person repeating a class, but they had no choice or control over it. These parents or guardians felt there was nothing they could do about it as the young person had to repeat to attain the required pass mark.

Other parents were not as positive or as accepting of their children repeating class. They were not happy to see the young person repeat a class, as this mother stated:

“I don’t like it because I expected my child will have a smooth way throughout his year in his studies I didn’t expect him to go backward. For example, a plant, when you water it you expect it to flourish and not to wither, when it withers it’s like you start afresh. You want when you do something God to bless you for it to succeed and not fail. This was the same expectation for my child. I was expecting him to proceed but he was moving back”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

According to this parent, her son repeated class several times and although she had initially accepted the decision albeit unhappily; she reported not to have taken the news of her son’s having to further repeat a class, well. She recounted that:

“I didn’t take the news well, I wanted to move him to another school but I didn't have enough time to do this and my parents who were looking after my son are getting old and don’t have the same energy and because my father worked away from home and used to come visit occasionally leaving my mother to look after the household which made it hard for her to chase up this transfer issue”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

Another guardian of the same young person reported being unhappy to see him repeat a class; and her response to the decision was to criticise and compare him to other children hoping this would invoke changes in the young person. She was quoted saying:

“…..whenever he repeats a class I scold him, I tell him that all the other children are going to find you there repeating all the time……. the boy is named after his grandfather, so he told him that he was an embarrassment to his name …... but all these were in vain. There is nothing rewarding to any parent than a child who is hard working likewise no parent likes to have their child repeat classes. But this child comes with a zero, this is a blow to his mother, to make matters worse he is the only child!”
Other parents expressed negative reactions, reprimanding the young person and for others threatening them with further class repetition as this parent noted:

“…. I then would tell him if you don’t do well again then I will not hesitate to take you back”

Reiterating this, another parent reported that she kept reminding her son of the reason he was retained and emphasized how younger children were catching up with him in the hope this would urge him to work hard. She recounted that:

“…. The way I saw him during that time he was not that young, he realized why he repeated and what he was required to do, I was also reminding him, like work hard my child, if you don’t work hard you are going to be stuck in that class for long. I was doing that on purpose to give him the urge to work hard, he was also thinking of the situation the youngsters who were in pre-school were now with him those were with him are now in secondary school, so he was caught in between, so he has to work hard to move from there”

Although some parents reported to have positively taken the decision or news of their children repeating a class, they however, admitted not to have openly disclosed this information to other people. One parent when asked of relatives’ and neighbours’ response to her son’s repeating a class, stated:

“…. They didn’t know he was repeating because I didn’t announce it. The only people that knew were the ones he was in school with, those he was with since pre-school, class one, those he was mostly friends with…”

Similarly, the guardians of one young person, recounted how their daughter used to keep the young person’s (who is her aunt) repetition a secret and did not want to be in the same class as her aunt as she felt ashamed that her aunt had repeated a class. According to these guardians, their daughter:

“... used to keep it a secret and even when she was asked about the class her aunt was in, she would say her aunt was in class 5 which wasn’t true. And she used to say that she didn’t like being with her aunt in the same class asking why should they be in the same class? ... but she never liked being in the same class with her because they were related”
4.2.4.2 Parents’ awareness of young people’s experiences

Some of the parents interviewed reported to have been aware of their young people’s feelings and the challenges they were experiencing at the time of repeating a class. For example, one parent reported to have noted the changes in her son’s mood following his repetition. Describing her son when he was repeating, she stated:

“…. To be honest he was lonely, even when he was coming to greet me you could see he was full of anger, and his colleagues were laughing at him telling him that he has repeated”

Parent of KS, 13-year-old boy

Another parent acknowledged being aware of what the young person was experiencing because of repeating a class, noting that the young person:

“…. was feeling bad because her colleagues were laughing at her… She felt ashamed; you know the condition of being laughed at especially children”

Parent of SO, 13-year-old girl

There were however, occasions when parents may have been unaware of the challenges that the young people were facing at the time they were repeating a class. These parents reported to have observed their young people’s reactions as normal, despite being aware of the effects repeating a class could have on children. When asked if they were aware of any challenges the young person faced or if he had faced any difficulties, this guardian responded:

“We have never seen him hurt or regretting, asking why he has repeated a class”

Guardian of DR, 14-year-old boy

Also, when reflecting on young people’s feelings of repeating a class or over their decision as parents to retain them; some parents admitted that they had not considered how young people felt, as this parent explained:

“…. I didn’t think of that, I just thought being a 9 or 10-year-old child, I thought he couldn’t be hurt. I did not think I needed to sit with him discuss with him, counsel him
advise him. When he agreed to repeat, I saw him going and coming back from school, I thought he was alright; we are on the same understanding”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

Although this parent admitted not to have considered the young person’s feelings, she also reported an observed difference when the young person was repeating a class. However, this was dismissed as nothing to do with the young person’s experience of repeating a class rather she attributed this to the shock of the decision. She described the young person as being:

“….. very quiet maybe it was a shock to him for repeating however his quietness wasn’t something to worry about. The way he is, he would never keep something if its bothering him, ... he will tell you and as a parent you might be lucky and recognize something in your child. So, in this case, if he wasn’t ok, happy, I think he would have told me”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

4.2.4.3 Managing young people’s experiences of repeating a class

Other parents admitted being aware of possible or actual challenges young people faced when they were repeating a class but disregarded these experiences. These parents reported that challenges, difficulties, hurt or pain served as a reminder for the young people to do better and they argued that the thought and fear of being laughed at should have motivated them to work harder at proceeding to the next class and avoid further class repetition. One parent for example, believed that:

“.....it was better to take him back and make him feel bitter and work hard when he sees and compares himself with his colleagues advancing....... Yes, this will help a lot. When he sees, he is left behind he will work harder as he will be hurting....... he won’t want it to happen again, he will work hard, and he will be careful”

Parent of KS, 13-year-old boy

Similarly, a guardian believed that, by repeating a class young people are forced to assess themselves and make the necessary changes to enable themselves to overcome difficulties. This guardian felt confident that having the young person repeat a class would not only
challenge her but would make her ask herself why the others have proceeded or have done better than her.

This guardian believed that the self-assessment would invoke the necessary motivation in the young person to work harder in order to avoid further class repetition. Other parents stated they also had used the threat of further class repetition to effect change, further noting that as parents their decision was final, and there was nothing young people could have done to change it. For example, one parent reiterated the finality of her decision as a parent, arguing that:

“...Since she, the young person is under my roof, under my empire she cannot refuse what I have decided for her....”

*Parent of SO, 13-year-old girl*

Another parent reported to have noted the effect repeating a class had on her son and his friendships with his peers at the time but disregarded this experience altogether. She did not consider friendship to be important in the learning process as this is not what children go to school for. She stated that her son’s loss of friends and the possible impact of this did not change her decision to retain him:

“.... because children are taken to school to learn and not to make friends, for example if his friend understands what he is taught in class but this one does not understand will the friendship solve his problem?”

*Parent of MM, 12-year-old boy*

Although not every parent observed or noted the difference in their children when repeating a class, some parents reflected on the potential impact on the young people’s feelings but upheld their decision to have them retained. According to one parent, the unexpectedness of repeating a class provided the young person with the opportunity to correct her mistakes, as she noted:

“For her, she must have been hurt. But for me as a parent, for example it’s like when one goes to work knowing you have this promotion and then unexpectedly you are suddenly demoted. This will definitely hurt you and every time you look at the person that took your place, you will always hurt inside.... Yes, it is like a challenge, you correct your mistakes so that you are not laughed at.... There are others who are hurt; they don’t speak out, they speak with actions by working hard”

*Parent of SO, 13-year-old girl*
In response to young people having to repeat class, parents reported to have supported them by talking to them and encouraging them, as this guardian narrated:

“……I tell them not to despair repeating the class does not make them less intelligent and it is not the end of the world. I would tell them to work hard and not to look or listen to what other people think of them. I give them encouraging words, so that they will do well by repeating, I would say just repeat and do better that even when you move ahead you will be able to handle the difficult situations, they now understand, and they are now carrying on with their studies as normal……”

Guardian 1 of SU, 15-year-old girl

Others reported to have advised young people to ignore those who were laughing at them, as this parent reported:

“…I encouraged him to ignore them as they had nothing better to do other than laugh and boo…”

Parent of MS, 13-year-old boy

The encouragement and advice given by their parents and guardians is said to have helped young people in managing their experiences of repeating a class. One parent noted the effectiveness of her encouragements on her daughter, reporting that:

“…For her, she felt bad, but I encouraged her to keep going… She accepted and said mama even I will try hard, I will fight and proceed”

Parent of MR, 14-year-old girl

### 4.2.4.4 Provision of extra tuition

Irrespective of parents’ and guardians’ views about repeating a class, their response was primarily to send them for extra tutoring, both from within schools and outside school, as a measure to improve literacy levels. Parents contended that young people should be enrolled into tuition to help them supplement their learning and boost or enhance their general learning morale and experience as one parent observed:

“when you give them help such as sending them to tuitions, it helps them to change, improve…and to be honest, a child likes school when they are doing well but if they
are failing it makes them hate school and truant or abscond. ........ when they come from school, they should have tuition, it helps a lot......”

Parent of MS, 13-year-old boy

4.2.5 IMPACT OF REPEATING A CLASS

This section presents the impact of repeating a class. The results are grouped as follows:

i) Positive impact.

ii) Negative impact.

iii) Non-consequential impact.

4.2.5.1 Positive impact

The positive impact of repeating a class is taken to mean the overall benefits the retained young people achieved both academically and socially. As the pupils were assessed to be struggling; the outcome of repeating a class on their overall improved performance and achievement should be evident. Parents reported to have made the decision to have their children repeat a class based on the struggles they observed their children to be experiencing or based on the advice from their children’s teachers.

Therefore, parents’ observation of repeating a class as having a positive impact was based on the outcomes of the assistance offered to young people to avail them with relearning, catching up and improving understanding and performance. They especially reported improvements in performance after young people repeated class. Parents response to the question regarding the benefits of young people repeating class were often reported to be academically related both in terms of performance improvement and being able to master aspects of learning that young people had been struggling with before repeating a class.
There were different reports that showed parents perceived benefits of repeating a class on various aspects, one of which was young people’s ability to read. Parents noted that for young people that were struggling with reading, their ability improved having been retained. Reflecting on her decision to retain her son, one parent responded that the outcome was successful because her son could now read, albeit in Kiswahili.

Also, parents reported seeing improvements in their children’s academic performance and believed this to have been due to repeating a class. When asked to elaborate on this, one parent reported to have noted the difference in her daughter’s performance in examinations and attributed this to be as a result of repeating a class. Concurring with this, another parent reported his son’s improved performance and inherently his position in class noting that:

“Before repeating a class, he was getting about 55% and lower in Mathematics, but now he is getting 65% and above! But I usually challenge him to get from 70% and above. And even in his end of year exams last year, he was the 24th from 48th!”

Parent of MS, 13-year-old boy

A similar observation made about the benefit of repeating a class was being able to pass examinations and proceed to higher classes as one parent recounted:

“….it helped him and when he did the class four national examinations he passed, and now he is in class six”

Parent of KS, 13-year-old boy

In addition, there were also reported social benefits to repeating a class, such as young people improved self-discipline and being pro-active in their learning and improved attitude towards school as well as gaining confidence in their learning.

Reflecting on the young person’s improved self-discipline, a guardian recounted that she: “... is now sharp in thinking, before repeating she was less concerned with studies, after coming from school she used to throw her books there without even revising but now she takes some of her time going through what she was taught at school without being reminded as we used to do”

Guardian 1 of SU, 15-year-old girl

Another reported benefit was in terms of the reduced time young people spent on playing or being playful. A guardian comparing how playful her daughter was prior to repeating a class, noted that repeating a class had produced a difference:

“......she is now less playful....”

Guardian 2 of SU, 15-year-old girl.
In some other cases, parents felt that repeating a class was beneficial as it reduced the risk of their children being under peer pressure to join delinquent groups. One parent observed:

“As a parent, I see the benefits.... I have saved him from the gangs”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

A further benefit of repeating a class as observed by the same parent was that there was a reduction on parental monitoring or supervision of the young person’s learning. This parent explained that, he did not:

“...... have to do much or struggle a lot with tuitions or insist on him going to school.... he now wakes up early to go to school and comes back between 5.00 pm and 6.00 pm. ...., they stay for further studying, learning. This has been helpful to me unlike before. ....... It is because of repeating”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

One of the guardians reported a benefit of repeating a class has been the recognition of the need for extra teaching, what has been referred to as ‘tuition’. According to this guardian, it made them:

“.....realize the significance and importance of tuition and saw how beneficial it was unlike before we didn’t know that tuition is capital, an investment”

Guardian 1 of SU, 15-year-old girl

4.2.5.2 Negative Impact

Although there were reported benefits of repeating a class, some of the parents’ responses regarding their young people repeating a class highlighted some disappointment and lack of support for the intervention. Various reasons for this are given below.

Increased financial obligation was underscored as one of the negative impacts of repeating a class. This was considered to be as a result of their response to repetition- which was to support their children by funding the extra added year. Elaborating further on this, one parent stated that:
“……Our expectations have been ruined. What we expected did not happen, instead we have been held, taken back. You could say, I would have been paying and dealing with a form two, secondary school student but now I have been held back!”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

Other parents reported to have had no plans to take their children for tuition until they were in higher classes. Describing this further, one guardian for example, observed that:

“……For us, we had planned that they would have started going for tuition when they were in secondary school particularly from pre – form one onwards, because then things would be too much and tough for them necessitating the need for extra help in getting subject resources and tuitions in order to guide and help them in managing and master their chosen subjects”

Guardian 1 of SU, 15-year-old girl

Although needing less parental involvement was reported by one parent to have been a benefit of having the young person repeat a class, not everyone agreed with this. According to another parent, repeating a class necessitated the parent to be extra vigilant in monitoring the young person and supervise his progress to prevent further class repetition or in some cases truancy. This parent noted that:

“…. as parents, we shouldn’t be relaxed believing children are going to school, we must make follow ups and question them. When I loosen up, relax for just a week, you see problems. So, it’s important to make close monitoring on daily basis…….. yes, I do that. I even go to school to speak to his teachers or I sometimes call them”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

Another negative consequence of repeating a class was noted to be increased truancy. Two parents reported truancy was both immediately after repeating a class and a few years after. According to one of the parents, her son: “… was also given a book and was supposed to report to the police station to see the community police officer who deals with difficulty and truanting children. So, he was required to sign twice or three times a day”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

The other parent described how the school asked for the intervention of community police in dealing with his son’s truancy.

“…. The head teacher told the young person, I won’t expel you, I’m taking you to the police. Here is a book, every day before you come to school you pass by the police
station to have it signed, when you come out, finish school you go to the police and they sign the book again. This frightened him....”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

4.2.5.3 Non-consequential impact

Non-consequential impact is a term used where there was an absence of any change in behaviour with an immediate correlation to the young person’s repeating a class. The negative consequences reported by parents tended to be in terms of young people’s response to repeating a class. However, there were parents and guardians who felt that repeating a class was of no benefit and that it was a waste of time for the young person, as reflected in the comment below:

“... It hasn’t, I have not seen it helping him...... When he repeated a class, at first, we thought maybe this will motivate and urge him to learn, that the hurt and pain of repeating will motivate him to study hard and take the lead as this was a repeat of what he had already learned but instead this turned out to be quite the opposite, and instead he ended up being the last one”

Guardian of DR, 14-year-old boy

Finally, some parents and guardians observed and considered class repetition to be neither beneficial nor to have negative effects or impact on young people as this parent stated:

“...I haven’t seen any effect”

Parent of SO, 13-year-old girl

4.2.6 MITIGATION OF CLASS RETENTION

This part presents parents’ interviews, feedback and recommended strategies to be considered to lessen class repetition and foster class promotion. The recommendations are categorised into: i. advice regarding class repetition procedures and practices and ii. possible alternative interventions to the current practice.
4.2.6.1 Advice and Recommendation

Most of the parents felt that there was a need to address the extenuating factors that resulted in the young people being retained in the same class. The majority of parents attributed class repetition to oversized classes concealing slow learners. This played a role in disadvantaging young people in their learning and as such, the improvement of the prevailing situation was considered the responsibility of government. The proposal was for the government to provide adequate infrastructure for both teachers and pupils; as one parent advised:

“The government should construct proper infrastructure befitting the number of pupils joining these schools and the ability of teachers to handle the classes. These includes; classrooms teaching tools and other facilities to improve the teaching and learning environment. If the learning environment is good students will spend much time at school even after school hours they will stay there studying waiting to go back home. The conditions of our school buildings, environment and other infrastructure are not good”

Parent of AB, 16-year-old boy

At school level, parents observed that there was need to encourage young people’s learning to prevent them from repeating classes. They noted that several problems for young people were due to poor monitoring by teachers. They specified the need for early identification of problems and called for close supervision which must then result offering effective intervention, as this guardian proposed:

“..teachers should identify pupils early on and sit with them and explain to them the effects of repeating a class .... tuition and monitor them from bad peer or group influence”

Guardian of DR, 14-year-old boy

Parents also noted the need to have a three-way partnership interaction between teachers, parents and young people. It was considered that this would enable young people to receive help from teachers and parents as well as encouraging them to be actively involved in their learning and decision making. It would also improve communication which plays a key role
in monitoring progress and also in early identification of challenges allowing for early intervention.

Reiterating this advice, one parent noted the advantage of such partnership on young people in avoiding repeating a class further. She proposed that:

“There should be close relationship and partnership between teachers and parents; and young people should be involved in decision making so that they don’t repeat their mistakes”

Parent of MMH, 15-year-old boy

In addition to this observation, tuition was also seen as a possible solution; one parent insisted that:

“There should be collaboration between teachers and parents to help children…. but here the solution is tuition only....”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

4.2.6.2 Alternative to repeating a class

Alternative interventions to help young people proceed or improve were suggested. Parents observed that they decided to have their children repeat classes following teachers’ advice and they could not oppose or challenge these teachers as; i) they wanted their children to learn and reach the expected standard(ii) they believed teachers knew best as they spend more time teaching these young people than parents did.

As such, parents considered teachers to have the authority in terms of their observations of young people’s progress or lack of it. Despite this, parents recommended the following:

Ensuring that young people remain engaged with learning. This was considered in cases where young people were thought to be playing a lot. Keeping young people engaged or busy with schoolwork will leave them with less time to play and this will inherently improve subject understanding thus avoiding the need to retain them, as this parent suggested:

“…… teachers should try to occupy or to engage the children with class work and give them little time to play, they should also give them a lot of homework to do after school. You know a child if you give him a homework he will work hard to finish it
knowing that he must submit it tomorrow in class. This will not give them ample time to play”

Parent of DR, 14-year-old boy

Enrolling young people in tuitions was suggested as a method to control and manage their time. This, again, provides an alternative to what parents considered to be ‘michezo mingi’, too much playing.

Another suggestion by parents was class promotion subject to tuition attendance. Some parents felt that young people could be promoted to higher classes while they receive extra tutoring either in school or at home as this parent suggested:

“.... My thoughts and opinion on alternative to repetition is not to retain a child, they should proceed and you as a parent look for a teacher to help with the subjects taught, look for the text books used in class. When the child goes to school, when they come, ask what they have learned, and you get the tuition teacher to ask and follow up on this”

Parent of MM, 12-year-old boy

4.2.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Parents’ views on class repetition influenced their response and support of their children. Some parents reported to have disliked their children repeating a class. Others believed repeating a class served as an alert that challenged young people’s way of learning, and that it afforded them the opportunity to work on improving in areas where they were struggling.

The latter held the view that it is normal to repeat and that doing so is beneficial not only to the child and their academic progress but also as a monitoring strategy for parents and guardians. Some parents admitted they had failed to recognise the emotional implications repeating a class might have had on young people in the long run but also reported they had observed no significant impact on the young person’s overall experiences.

Other parents noted that they were aware there may be some negative repercussions on the young person but that despite these observations, given another chance they would make the
same decision. They believed this to be a lesson to young people that would compel them to re-consider and be attentive in their learning.

Although these parents reported their observations of their young people in response to having repeated a class, recognising the difficulties they faced, they stated that they would still make their children repeat a class if it meant availing them with the extra support to successfully manage their studies and pass their exams.
5. **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses findings from both young people and their parents in relation to the experience of repeating a class. The findings will be discussed under four main themes. These are:

(i) Participation.
(ii) Systems involved.
(iii) Gender preference.
(iv) Management and coping mechanisms.

**Participation:** This is in relation to the overall decision-making process considering young people’s involvement or engagement in making decisions about repeating a class. To put this in the correct perspective, both International and national children’s statues will be examined in relation to the participation of children in decision-making, the barriers and consequences for non-participation and possible mechanisms to improve or promote such undertaking will be discussed in detail.

**Systems involved:** This is in relation to the systems that may have an influence on different aspects of young people’s lives. As humans we live among communities and environments that produce interwoven ecological systems that are transactional with each other and as such, these systems may impact on our learning, among other things. Therefore, the focus of the discussion in this section is on the education system and other ecological factors that affect the structure in which these young people are learning in and how these impact on their achievements and learning outcomes.

**Gender preference:** This is discussed in relation to parents’ apparent preferences when making the decision to consent to have their child repeat a class. This section examines gender parity in primary education, repetition rates for both boys and girls, the impacts of class repetition academically, socially, and financially, and finally the possible (dis)empowerment that may result. This section will also briefly examine and address the role of teachers and schools or other educational institutions in this matter.
Management and coping mechanisms: This section examines and discusses the coping strategies that young people used when repeating a class, as well as looking at how the support they received affected or strengthened their coping mechanism.

5.1 CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN MAKING THE DECISION TO REPEAT A CLASS
Children have traditionally been considered to be vulnerable, immature and inexperienced individuals (Cox et al, 2011; Owen, 2017). As such, they largely depend on adults’ protection and having decisions about their welfare made for them. In this study, decisions tended to be made by adults, irrespective of children’s opinion, if they believed that such decisions were in the children’s best interest.

This has been reiterated by Kellet (2011), who emphasizes the importance of engaging and promoting children and young people’s participation in order to understand their concerns or perspectives and be able to meet their needs adequately. Findings from the current study highlight the interviewed young people’s dissatisfaction with the process of decision-making about retaining them in class.

Most of these young people were of the view that decisions to retain them were made by teachers, and parents were merely ‘advised’ or told that their children had to be retained based on their test scores. Belot and Vandenberge (2011) observed a similar method to have been used in French speaking Belgium where pupils sat for examinations at the end of year and retention decisions were taken by the teachers once the exams were taken. Findings of this study on young people’s experience of repeating a class in Tanzania indicate that such decision-making approach aggrieved the young people as they felt these decisions had been made in haste and without asking their opinion.

The opinions gathered in this study are from the perspective of young people with regards to their participation in the process of decision-making. For these young people, participation in the process of decision-making was important to them, even if it meant just voicing their opinion and not necessarily making the final decision.

In this section the participation of children in decision-making is outlined by: i) defining and describing child participation; ii) reviewing the relevant international and national legal frameworks and policies; iii) reviewing the barriers to child participation in Tanzania; iv) examining the consequences of not involving or engaging children in decision-making, and

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7 In this section words such as ‘in this study’, ‘study findings’, ‘in the study’ will be used interchangeably to refer to the study young people’s experience of repeating a class.
finally, v) evaluating mechanisms to facilitate involvement of children in decision-making, especially within the context of the education system.

5.1.1 WHAT IS CHILD PARTICIPATION?

In literature about children’s rights, ‘participation’ refers to children’s involvement and engagement in the process of decision-making where their views and voices are listened to (Thomas, 2002, 2007; Sinclair, 2004; Kellet, 2011; Sargeant and Gillet-Swan, 2015). Sinclair (2004) argues that child participation is multi-dimensional and should consider various elements including the extent of participation; the focus of participation in decision-making; the nature of participation; and the children and young people involved in participation (2004:108).

5.1.2 CHILD PARTICIPATION - LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulates children’s rights to express their views and be involved in decision-making about matters concerning them. The treaty is legally-binding to parties that have signed and ratified it. Tanzania signed and ratified the convention in 1991.

Tanzania also ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2003. This is a continent-wide agreement which addresses the challenges and abuse African children experienced that was considered to be unique due to ‘their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger, and on account of the child’s physical and mental immaturity he or she needs special safeguards and care’ (ACRWC, 1999:1).
The Charter in Article 4 advocates that children’s voices be heard stating that, ‘If children can voice their opinions, then those opinions should be heard and taken into deliberation during legal and administrative proceedings’; Article 7 states ‘Every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views should be allowed to express his or her opinions freely’ (UNICEF).

In 2009, the Tanzanian government enacted the Law of the Child Act, a principal legislation that consolidates all laws and policies relating to children’s rights to operationalize its international commitment and national obligations. Part II of the Law of the Child Act stipulates rights and welfare of the child. Under Section 11 of the Act; ‘A child shall have a right of opinion and no person shall deprive a child capable of forming views the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decisions which affect his well-being’ (Law of the Child Act, 2009:15).

The provision and wording of this section reflects the country’s commitment to the two international treaties; the UNCRC and the ACRWC. Although this study on the experience of young people repeating a class did not set out to establish each respondent’s knowledge of the various international or national treaties on the rights of children, the findings seem to reflect non-observance of the principle of child participation as stipulated by both the UNCRC and the Law of the Child Act, 2009.

The Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC) is mandated to develop and regulate policies on gender affairs, community development programme, family planning, parastatal organizations and its management. In its plan of action for child participation, the Tanzanian MCDGC\(^8\) noted the non-involvement of children, despite the ratification of international conventions and the enactment of the Law of the Child Act 2009.

Despite children in Tanzania comprising 50% of the population, the report stated that they still faced challenges in realizing their rights and having their voices heard, despite the existence of the legal and policy framework (MCDGC, 2014: ii). The report noted that challenges to the participation of children in decision-making on matters concerning their

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\(^8\) Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC) Published a National Plan of Action for Child Participation providing a framework for promoting children’s participation, establishing structures that reconciles and coordinates various stakeholders’ efforts and initiatives in advocating and promoting children’s participation.
welfare included a) lack of awareness by the community on the rights of children and b) traditional practices in relation to communication between adults and children.

The Tanzanian government established mechanisms and strategies that would address children’s rights and advocate their participation. These included the establishment of Junior Council, known in Kiswahili as Baraza la Watoto, and the development of the National Child Participation toolkit,9 and the National Plan of Action for Child Participation10.

Thomas’s (2007) research about the participation of children in the political arena in the United Kingdom, noted a lack of direct involvement in decision-making by children. Although Thomas’s study is based on non-participation of children in the United Kingdom, his observations can be extrapolated to other areas of participation within the Tanzanian context as evidenced by the Tanzanian MCDGC Plan of Action for Child Participation. The Plan aims at providing structures that will promote participation of children in various contexts within communities and society at large.

By ratifying the UNCRC and the ACRWC, the responsibility for implementing these treaties and laws on day-to-day, falls on practitioners working with children and, as such, they could be considered responsible for ensuring children’s participation in decision-making. Despite various efforts by the Tanzanian government, such as the establishment of school committees (Baraza) and several policies addressing rights of children and the need to promote their participation in decision-making, findings from this study indicate ongoing challenges to achieving the rights of children’s participation in decision-making matters concerning their welfare.

Findings from this study further point to the importance of involving children in decision-making, through some of the already existing mechanisms such as school councils. This seems to be supported by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training’s (MoEVT) commitment to promoting children’s participation. According to the report by the MCDGC (2014), the MoEVT ‘will provide policy guidance and mechanisms to integrate issues raised

9 This kit was developed by the MCDGC and stakeholders to assist and guide interaction between children and those working with them in discussing issues of concern and together be able to find solutions.
10 This sets out children’s role and responsibilities in effecting changes at family, community and societal level by influencing attitudes and decision making on matters concerning their well-being.
by children in school committees (barazas), in school decisions such as on school management and teaching’ (MCDGC, 2014:29).

5.1.3 CHILD PARTICIPATION IN TANZANIA CONTEXT: BARRIERS TO CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN TANZANIA

Despite the commitment of the Government of Tanzania through the Law of the Child Act (2009), children’s participation in decision making is still very limited. Their involvement seems to be faced with cultural, social and political barriers. Decisions made for children by adults, on the basis of their seniority are not usually challenged.

As such, despite legislation, there is still resistance within communities regarding rights of children, particularly in decision-making as this is seen to challenge parental authority and undermine traditional community practices (MCDGC, 2014).

In Tanzania, children are expected to respect and listen to adults, without challenging their decisions. As such, children’s rights to participate in decision-making could be seen to undermine cultural and traditional attitudes that have existed for generations. This was evident in parents’ responses about engaging young people in making the decision to repeat a class.

Despite young people’s discontent about not being involved in decision-making, cultural norms prevent them from challenging decisions made by adults. In Tanzanian culture children are expected to be respectful and accept decisions made, since these are believed to be made in the best interest of the child. Inherently, this could perpetuate young people's sense of suffering in silence. Young people were reluctant to voice their disapproval or challenge adult’s authority.

Most young people seemed to have accepted their parents’ compliance of teachers’ decisions to retain them and convinced themselves about the perceived benefits of repeating a class,
which might have reinforced the sense of how the young people felt. They felt powerless to challenge the decision made and reported to have accepted it with a sense of helplessness. They did not feel they could disclose how they felt to their parents for reasons that these feelings would not change the outcome or the decision already made. One young person further argued that he did not feel the need to disclose his feelings due to his gender. This kind of acceptance can be described as ‘deceptive acceptance’\(^{11}\) as these young people seemed to resent decisions made, potentially internalizing their feelings about them, and hiding such feelings from their parents.

This may have been the young people’s coping strategy since they could not challenge their parents. However, the findings of this study highlight the need for further research: the young people’s actual emotional and psychological experience of repeating a class generally remained unknown to both teachers and parents, as the young people believed that making their feelings known would not have made a difference.

5.1.4 CULTURAL BARRIERS TO CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN TANZANIA

Based on the cultural context in which these young people live, parents may not have felt the need to consult young people in decisions regarding them - given their inherent parental responsibility over their children’s lives, education and future. Such a parental approach is reflected in Articles 11 and 31 of the ACRWC, which calls for the preservation of African morals, traditions, values and cultures and which places responsibilities on children to respect their parents, ‘superiors’ and elders both within the families and in their communities.

In addition, the Tanzanian Law of the Child Act 2009 places a duty on the child to preserve and strengthen cultural values of the community and society in general. This may pose a challenge in reconciling children’s rights and cultural and traditional practices and expectations.

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\(^{11}\) Young people’s acceptance of the decision to retain them in class despite not being happy and not in agreement with the decision. The acceptance is based on helplessness borne from inability to change the decision or challenges those responsible for making it and thus leaving them with no choice but to grudgingly accept it.
5.1.5 SOCIAL BARRIERS TO CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN TANZANIA

In examining child participation in Australia, Sargeant and Gillet-Swan (2015) note that, ‘when consideration turns to the child’s viewpoint, teachers continue to control at all costs the decision-making process within their classrooms (2015:178). Sargeant and Gillet-Swan’s findings seem to reflect those of this study, despite the cultural and social-economic differences between countries. They noted teachers’ failure to engage and involve children in decision-making because of various factors such as behaviour management, job-related pressure and stress. In the Tanzanian context, it could be inferred to relate to teaching and working conditions where teachers are faced with large class sizes, limited resources and poor classroom infrastructure. This could result in teachers being unable to control, manage or monitor the class which in turn affects the quality of teaching delivered (Wedgwood, 2007; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014; Schipper et al, 2014).

Because of large class sizes, teachers may be unable to engage with individual pupils to address their difficulties or to provide general support to young people (Wedgwood, 2007; Carlitz, 2009; Rono, 2012; Kambuga, 2013a; 2013b; Rwegoshora, 2011; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014; Schipper et al, 2014). Cultural practices combined with the challenge of managing large class sizes, may contribute to decisions being made for young people without consideration for their opinions or views.

Parents and teachers being in positions of power and authority over young people’s lives - could fundamentally disadvantage them by making decisions for them which they were not able to challenge or discuss. One of the child respondents MM, 12-year-old boy reported that he:

“couldn’t challenge teachers as [he] needed to be taught and to learn from them, and nor could [he] challenge [his] parents as [he] needed them to raise [him] and look after [him].”

Hence, young people may fear to upset the status quo despite their discontent. Although participation of children in decision-making or in matters concerning their well-being seems to have been receiving wide recognition in Tanzania through the various policy
and law instruments, from this study there are no tangible results of these efforts. The operationalization of this in the education arena appears to be missing.

5.1.6 IMPACT OF CHILDREN’S EXCLUSION FROM DECISION-MAKING

Findings in this study highlight how a lack of involvement or participation in decision-making affected young people. The young people had to deal with stigmatisation which manifested differently affecting their self-esteem, confidence levels and compliance. As a result, some responded positively by working hard while other became defiant leading to truancy. The focus here is on inferences constructed or drawn based on their feelings of deceptive acceptance.

5.1.6.1 Self-esteem & Confidence

Generally, young people blamed teachers for making the decision to retain them and informing parents, and parents for accepting what was communicated to them by the teachers and acting on it. Both teachers and parents are often oblivious of the feelings the students have toward repeating (McGrath, 2006). Many studies have found that repeating a class has an adverse effect on students’ self-esteem and motivation (Marsh et al, 2009) and additionally that it stigmatizes students and impairs their natural ability to interact with their peers (Okurut, 2015)

It is worth noting that studies that have reported academic gains attributable to class repetition have gone on to add that the gains are short-term and as a result eventually retained students end up lagging behind, which affects their self-esteem and increases the probability of dropping out of school (Brophy, 2006; and Jimerson et al., 1997).

This study revealed that social cultural factors may increase the likelihood of children being retained. This is because, Tanzania, being still largely sub urbanised, retains traditional and
patriarchal structures, reinforcing the notion that the parents know best. Students seemed to ascribe to the belief that it was right for parents to accept decision made by teachers to retain them. Such beliefs may have been due to a lack of knowledge about their rights and the cultural expectations of respecting adults’ decisions. Given that they believed they were at fault for repeating a class, these young people seemed to want commendation from their parents by working hard to improve their grades and, in the process, improve their self-confidence.

It has been established that children like and respond to praise better than they do to criticism (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002; Bear, et al, 2017). This seemed to be the case with the retained young people in this study. As such, the decision to retain these young people could be said to have impacted not only on their self-confidence but also on their perception of self in their parents’ eyes. Their efforts to work hard might have thus been an attempt to address various factors, including redeeming their self-worth in the eyes of their parents as well as promotion to next class.

5.1.6.2 Truancy

It has been observed that a common reaction to the non-consultative nature of the process of decision making, students resorted to truancy as a coping mechanism to demonstrate their anger and frustration. Involuntary class repetition also has far reaching negative effects on social, emotional and behavioural aspects. Brophy (2006) reported sixth graders to claim repeating a class to be the most stressful thing in lives.

According to Thomas (2007), truancy could be the only form of resistance that children feel is available to them. In this study, several young people admitted to truant and abscond from classes following the decision to retain them, and another threatened to drop out of school. This is in line with Leeson’s (2007) findings, where a young person was reported to have run away and behave badly because he had not been listened to and therefore felt powerless, felt his choice of action to have been his only recourse (2007:273). A comparison between
students dealing with similar issues but who were promoted to the next class and those retained found that the latter were more likely to have behaviour problems and poor attendance as a consequence in the long-term (Byrd, Weitzman, and Auinger, 1997; Jimerson, 2001).

Jimerson (2001) argues that repeating a class contributes to a negative attitude toward school and learning, with many students permanently dis-engaging from learning. The effect deduced is that those students associate school and education with embarrassment and threat. This type of response could in turn create a vicious circle for young people. Not only would they be labelled as truants and failures, but this may lead to poor achievement both directly and indirectly attributable to their experience of repeating a class (Grissom & Shepherd, 1989).

In turn, by this behaviour, children are likely to be at risk of being retained further – probably following the same process of non-participation- which could lead to dropping out of schools. It has been observed that students who repeated a class have a 20 to 50% likelihood of dropping out of school compared to their peers of similar ability who were promoted to the next class thus remaining with their peers (Alexander et al, 2004; Eide & Showalter 2001; Jimerson, 1999, 2001; Temple et al, 2004).

5.1.6.3 Deceptive Acceptance

In this study, young people who have been retained in a class seemed to have conflicting feelings towards the whole experience from the process of making the decision through to the overall experience of going through class repetition. As children, they lacked a voice and could not influence the decision made.

Most of them reluctantly accepted the outcome of the decision and the ‘practical’ support given for their academic improvement while others truanted albeit for a short time. Despite the perceived benefits to their academic well-being and outcome, deceptive acceptance and resentment seemed to be the norm among these respondents, which made them oppress their anger and stress.
Leeson’s\textsuperscript{12} (2007) findings echo this in the sense that he noted how young people played no part in the process of decision making and they experienced an overwhelming feeling of helplessness which impacted on the development and maintenance of their self-esteem and resilience (2007:272).

\textsuperscript{12}Leeson’s study looked at the experiences of young people’s involvement in a variety of decision-making processes whilst in the care of the local authority.
5.2 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TANZANIAN: POSSIBLE STRUCTURAL INFLUENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE’S CLASS REPETITION

This section explores the various systems or structures in young people’s education experience that may have had a role in their learning and the decision to have them retained in class. From the study findings, parents felt that the environment young people lived in, influenced their studies and how well they did in school.

These findings reinforce Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory that considers the existence of a link between surrounding systems and environments and how this can have an influence in individuals’ lives. Bronfenbrenner posits that individuals cannot be understood by looking or focusing on them as isolated entities, rather by looking at the interaction between or with their surrounding systems, environment and their interconnectedness with each other (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 1998; Berk, 2007; Lindon, 2007; Slater and Bremner, 2011; Neal and Neal, 2013).

The ecological system influences the child’s behaviour such that any conflict or change in one system affects other systems as well (Paquette and Ryan, 2001). Cross (2017) elaborates further, that the way a child experiences their micro system at home and at school, needs to be considered and incorporated in understanding the influence this may have on children’s learning.

This section looks at some of the education structures that are or were involved in young people’s learning and how these could have had an impact on their learning. As findings suggest in Chapter 5 Section 2 of this study, the decisions to retain young people may not have taken into consideration the context in which they were learning. Ungar et al (2013) warn against such a simplistic approach of assessing young people’s progress without considering surrounding factors and their environment or their ecological systems.

The context of these young people’s lives is of relevance in shedding light on the influences on their learning, such as class size, availability of resources, quality and mode of delivery. Bronfenbrenner, categorised the various systems that surround individuals as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. These systems will be explored to
assess what impact they have on young people’s learning and the decision to retain them in class.

5.2.1 MICROSYSTEMS

The microsystem is the closest system to an individual and has immediate influence on them by nature of their interactions, such as their parents, siblings, home, school, peer group or community environment of the child (Bronfenbrenner & Moris, 1998). It is the smallest and most direct environment in which the child lives. Typically, these interactions within the microsystem involve personal relationships with family members, classmates, teachers and caregivers, in which influences go back and forth. How these groups or individuals interact with the child will affect how the child grows (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

The different dynamics in family structures, parental background i.e. parental involvement or lack thereof influence young people’s behaviour and, in the context of this study, their learning outcome. Similarly, school being a part of an individual child’s microsystem will consequently influence their learning outcomes. Within school settings, factors such as class size, teachers’ support and the provision of tuition seemed to have had an impact on young peoples’ learning outcomes and subsequent decisions to retain them in a class.

Earthman (2002), Harbaugh and Cavanagh, (2013), put forward the fact that classroom characteristics directly influence students’ self-esteem including their educational standards, learning outcomes and classroom learning (cited in Epri, 2016). Khan & Iqbal (2012:162) add to this discussion by stating that, a class consists of a homogeneous group of pupils, who work and progress together. This means that students can gain knowledge of various skills from each other and progress if supported well in their learning environment.

5.2.1.1 Class Size and Implications for Learning
In Tanzania an overcrowded class refers to one where pupils exceed the prescribed official ratio 1:40 teacher-pupil (MoEVT, 2007; Kambuga, 2013a; Kambuga, 2013b). Studies have found that class overcrowding in primary schools in Tanzania is prevalent with the average class size of 100 pupils in a class and in some areas more (Kumburu, 2011; Rwegoshora, 2011; Kambuga, 2013a; 2013b; PMO – RALG 2014). In this study, young people, their parents and the researcher observed the prevalence of overcrowding in primary school classes.

A research study in Pakistan by Khan and Iqbal (2012), established that “the average number of students in most classrooms ranges from 70 to 120” (Khan and Iqbal, 2012:162). They found that effective teaching was not possible in these overcrowded classes and most of the teachers were facing instructional, discipline, physical and evaluation problems.

Because of the Universal Primary Education policy in Tanzania, the teacher-pupil ratio has remained a problem with an increase in enrolment and resulting demand for teachers, thus putting a strain on teachers and resources (Davidson, 2007; Woods, 2008; Rwegoshora, 2011). Despite the government’s target of having a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40, Kambuga (2013a) reports this has not been achieved.

The schools involved in the study of young people’s experience of repeating a class were from an urban district of Dar es Salaam and almost every participant was of the opinion that they were learning in large class sizes, thus being distracted during lessons and making it difficult for teachers to monitor progress or offer support.

The above observations of the state of class overcrowding in Tanzania, is in line with research from other countries that has found overcrowding in class to affect the quality of learning. Burnett, (1995); Earthman (2002); Yaman and Uygulamada, (2009) found that overcrowded classroom conditions get in the way of teachers’ attention to individual students and slows down the progress of students’ learning. Earthman further noted that “Teachers only had time to cover the basic lessons and could not spend extra time with slow learners” (Earthman, 2002: 11).
5.2.1.2 Class Distractions

As already mentioned, in this study, young people revealed they found it difficult to concentrate in large, overcrowded classes because of the number of distractions in class, particularly from other pupils, which resulted in a loss of valuable lesson time as teachers tried to discipline or control the class. This is supported by research done by Yaman and Uygulamada (2009), who found that large classes can force teachers to abandon student centred learning and focus more on teacher centred lessons which has been adopted as the norm teaching strategy. Pupils in such classes may struggle to learn due to lack of sufficient one-to-one time with the teacher or having to rely on their peers for help during lessons.

As a result, large classes may deprive both the teacher and the student the opportunity to participate and interact fully in lessons. Being in an overcrowded class also presents a challenge for pupils’ learning as it deprives them of the opportunity to utilise resources adequately - they may have to share resources such as books and be unable to interact with each other in exploring the subjects taught. Moreover, in overcrowded classes, teachers are noted to have limited time to focus on the needs of slow learners and are forced to neglect them to keep pace with the prescribed time allocation for each learning area (Yaman & Uygulamada 2009). O’Connor and MacCartney (2007) note that there is an association between achievement and classroom environment. They argue that pupils learn through interaction, participation and engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, Turano (2005) posits that for effective learning, class environment needs to provide a feeling of safety and wellbeing to the pupils.

5.2.1.3 Progress Monitoring

The findings of this study suggest there is a link between class size and progress monitoring\textsuperscript{13} that may have an impact on young people’s learning outcome potentially leading to their having to repeat a class. Being able to closely monitor pupils’ progress could help in early

\textsuperscript{13} This is in reference to overseeing pupils’ learning, observing and supervising their progress and being able to identify those struggling and setting action plans or preventive intervention measures and evaluate the effectiveness of such measures on pupils’ learning and performance or goals set.
identification of pupils’ needs resulting in a pupil-specific preventive or intervention plan, to address areas that may need improvements and possibly avoid retaining them.

The influence of young people’s microsystem on their interactions and learning environment could further be observed in their interaction with their teachers, especially in terms of support offered in their learning and in their teachers’ response to their class repetition. This is further supported by Morse et al (2004) who propose an inbuilt system to ensure continuous progress assessment.

5.2.1.4 Support for Young People when Retained in Class

There appeared to be lack of a clear, established or well-designed plan of support for retained young people. The majority of young people interviewed felt that the support received from their teachers was limited to advice about tuition enrolment. Moreover, based on reported teaching and class conditions, it may have been unrealistic for teachers to provide one-to-one support to retained pupils. According to Plank and Candliffe (2011), the quality of learning and student well-being is a direct result of good classroom organization which provides a strong foundation in the education cycle. Additionally, Earthman, (2002); and Burnett, (1995), argue that schools should be able to provide quiet and safe places for student learning and private counselling.

The current process does not make such provision and leaves the young people to deal with the public demotion and possible shock of the decision without any psychosocial consideration or support that maybe caused by this decision. David (2008), Ndaruhutse (2008), and Bowman-Perrot (2010) observed this to be de-motivating and that it could result into young people’s loss of self-confidence or self-esteem.

An action plan involving young people, their families and teachers could be used as a mechanism to support retained pupils in order to better manage the process of repeating a class. Such a plan could give young people the opportunity to gradually get into their retained classes as well as give them time to transition and come to terms with the decision of being
retained. There also need to be a linked approach across the school, that would involve partnerships between teachers, parents and pupils; considering both curricular and extra-curricular design, engagement and support for the retained pupils (Scott et al., 2008).

The current process does not make such provision and leaves the young people to deal with the public demotion and possible shock of the decision without any psychosocial consideration or support. David (2008), Ndaru hutse (2008), and Bowman-Perrot (2010) observed this to be demotivating and that it could result in young people’s loss of self-confidence or self-esteem.

Pupils’ success is underpinned by the development of a range of factors including their sense of purpose, resourcefulness, connectedness and capability (Lizzio & Wilson, 2010). Education improvement in pupils that have been retained would be achieved following interventions that enhance pupils’ preparedness to study. Increased personal communication between students and their teachers could provide early detection and intervention strategies for students at risk of dropping out. Increasing students’ engagement with their peers would also enhance the quality of the learning experience, inevitably leading to an improved schooling experience. Such a plan could give young people the opportunity to gradually get back into their retained classes and likely give them time to transition and come to terms with the decision of being retained.

5.2.1.5 Support for young people when retained in class – Tuition

The researcher’s anecdotal discussions with some of the teachers suggested that overcrowded classes made it difficult for teachers to practice alternative teaching methods that would have prevented children from being retained. Instead, as findings convey from both young people and parents, teachers advised tuition attendance as a solution to assist young people being retained in class.

Despite Klem and Connell (2004) and Rockoff’s (2004) observation about the importance of teachers’ support to student engagement in learning and education, the findings of this study
show the onus of repeating a class seemed to have been on young people, and the potential solution was to undertake extra tutoring.

Tuition attendance was reported by both the parents and the teachers to have helped young people who had repeated a class. This reported success could have been due to these young people learning and re-learning the same subjects, both in class and tuitions thus enabling them to do well. Interestingly, some of these tuition teachers are the same class teachers in various young people’s schools. This is line with other studies that noted students reporting having better grades after receiving tuition (Sahito et al 2017).

The popularity of tuitions has been due to the reported teaching methods where teachers are said to adapt various strategies to teaching to ensure their fee paying ‘customers’ reach a certain learning outcome.

From anecdotal conversation with teachers, almost all (regardless of being newly qualified or experienced) seem to engage in running tuition classes. This poses the question as to whether the quality of teaching in schools is compromised on purpose. Rajani (2001) suggested that teachers were deliberately under-teaching to force pupils to attend tuition classes that they offered. Despite Rajani’s report being over ten years old, there is no conclusive evidence in this study to support this position.

However, it was observed that the tuition attendance for these young people is on the advice teachers give both young people and their parents following the decision to retain them in class. Understanding tuition provisions and attendance, and the impact on pupils could be vital in providing support within such varying learning contexts to promote a positive learning outcome and overall achievement.

5.2.2 MESOSYSTEMS

The mesosystem involves interactions between individuals’ various Microsystems where the impact or influence may not necessarily have a direct link to individuals. Examples of such
systems could be an individual’s neighbourhood or teachers’ training curricula, where this does not affect young people directly. In this study, various aspects of school such as overcrowding in class, gender and poverty seem to have influenced young people’s learning and the subsequent decision to retain them in class.

This knowledge could in turn be used to support young people when they are going through class repetition, but the knowledge could also be used to develop intervention plans that would address individual’s learning. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), Berk (2007), Lindon (2007), Paquette and Ryan (2001), Slater and Bremner (2011), Neal and Neal (2013), Ungar et al (2013) and Cross (2017), call for an assessment that is holistic and considers the academic history of the pupil, their family background and possible factors that may influence learning outcomes.

The rise in pupil enrolment rate following the introduction of Universal Primary Education policy led to the demand for more teachers to be trained (Wedgwood, 2007; Woods, 2008). The training that teachers received influenced their ability to deliver lessons and manage classes (Woods, 2008). Wayne and Youngs (2003) and Rockoff (2004) have emphasized the association between quality of teaching and teachers’ impact on pupils’ learning outcomes and achievement.

In response to the demands for more teachers, the government recruited poorly qualified and inexperienced teachers (Wedgwood, 2007; Woods, 2008; Carlitz, 2009). According to Wedgwood (2007) the government recruited teachers ‘from populations who had not attended secondary school and trained through distance training programmes’ (2007:386), which compromised the quality of teachers’ training. The government’s approach to teachers’ recruitment may have had a ripple effect in terms of learning and education attainment of those taught by these ‘underqualified’ teachers. Wedgwood (2007) observed that these teachers would have learned through the same learning conditions of overcrowded classes and shortage of qualified teachers, thus perpetuating a cycle of what he termed as ‘poor teaching’.
5.2.3 EXOSYSTEMS

This section would not be complete without a bridged version of exosystems and its effect on school repetition. Exosystems represent the larger social systems that individuals may not necessarily have direct interactions with but that still have an effect on them. Examples of exosystems could be a young person’s parents’ workplace, police, health and social care structures or education policies. Although young people may not have direct interactions with any aspect of these systems, they are likely to experience their influence. In the context of this study, the education policy of retaining pupils affects these young people.

Class repetition has been sanctioned in education policy and, as such, young people are subjected to such practice. From this study, young people seemed to be retained for various reasons ranging from failing end of term exams to being unable to read or write. Lack of clarity on class repetition policy can be argued to disadvantage young people, when these decisions are made at teachers’ discretion.

As such, decisions to have young people repeat a class could thus be argued to have been made unnecessarily, firstly by failing to take into account young people’s detailed backgrounds, their surrounding systems and the influence of these systems on young people’s learning; and secondly by decisions to retain young people possibly being motivated by teachers’ own interest of enrolling retained pupils in their tuition centres (Rajani, 2001).

Darling – Hammond (1998) noted that teachers and schools need to abandon the deficit model, which places the problem of poor achievement on the child and their family and acknowledge that classroom and school practices also contribute significantly to a child’s low achievement.

5.2.4 MACROSYSTEMS

The macrosystems are the most outer layers of individuals’ system; they include geopolitical factors, natural catastrophes and social and cultural practices- both beneficial and harmful.
Some of the harmful cultural practices include early marriage. The international and national laws that govern children rights influence all other aspects of policy provisions and implementation. Intervention and practice in individuals’ lives always falls within the subscribed principles of their macrosystem (Ryan, 2001; Cross, 2017).

The focus should thus be on the influence of international and national policies on the overall education system, children’s rights and cultural practices, as well as beliefs - where aspects such as gender influence decisions that are made in children’s lives. Gender as a determinant in decision-making will be further explored in the next section (the role of gender in parents’ decision-making).

5.2.5 A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE PROCESS OF MAKING DECISION TO RETAIN YOUNG PEOPLE

Neal and Neal (2013) propose a different approach from Bronfenbrenner’s theory in understanding children in their context. Appreciating the fluid nature of the three systems, there is no time when the young person can be exclusively in one system. They call for a move from ‘systems being nested within one another’ to ‘systems that are networked into each other’. This model offers a holistic approach to decision making process.

The model advocates the need to look at the interactive nature of various factors affecting the young person. The implication of this approach is that, rather than considering children as passive participants within the ecosystem in their context, they suggest considering children as active agents - and that the surroundings and environments they are in, influence their behaviour and their learning as much as children influence their surroundings.

They suggest understanding systems as being interactional and fluid and not to limit one’s understanding to the immediate systems one is in (since one system could influence and determine another system). The networked model would be ideal to use when making assessments about whether to retain young people, since the outcome or cause of retaining young people could be a result of different systems interacting and impacting on each other.
Below is an illustration that Neal and Neal (2013) proposed as a network of ecological systems that can be used to understand children’s learning in their environment.

Figure 1 Illustration of Networked Model (Neal and Neal 2013)

Figure 1 illustrates the child’s place within the network model of ecological systems and how various systems or settings interact and influence the child’s learning outcome. As the model illustrates, the child has three Microsystems that affect his day to day life. The first microsystem; composed of the father, the siblings, the mother or the guardian is referred to as the Family microsystem. The second Microsystem; composed of the mentor (coach), the teacher and the school headmaster (principle), is the School microsystem. The third is composed of the family, the child and the teacher. How these three Microsystems interact with the child is very important and key to the emotional balance of the child as they relate to the child directly.

The second interaction is the mesosystem where the parent can deal directly with the teacher without the child. This is the School-family interaction. In the study of young people’s experience of repeating a class; this is well demonstrated by the way decisions were made to have the child repeat a class where interaction during the process of decision making was between teachers (schools) and parents.
The final system is the interaction between the policy makers (Principal, The Mayor and the Superintendent); this forms the education policy exosystem. In the study, this includes decisions like the implementation of policies such as, Education for All (EFA) and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) that have resulted in an increase in pupils’ enrolment, thus impacting on class sizes, quality of education and increase in young people repeating classes (Uwezo Tanzania 2014).

It is possible there might have been different interplay between the two Microsystems- as the Networked Model illustrates above. These could be further examined to explore how certain exosystems may have an impact on young people, and how the mesosystems could facilitate an understanding of young people and possibly aid the process of decision-making. As such, understanding the various systems as networked systems may provide better clarity on how the different systems and settings, especially in the education arena- can be explored in order to understand individuals and their learning, as well as be able to devise an intervention plan to support learning within the context of these children’s systems.
5.3 THE ROLE OF GENDER IN PARENTS’ DECISIONS TOWARDS CLASS REPETITION

While the gender\textsuperscript{14} of a child seemed to be a significant aspect when seeking parents’ consent to retain young people, parents had different concerns. Girls’ parents were worried about the prolonged stay in primary school and the resulting maturity of the girl hence an increased chance of an early pregnancy while still at school and the associated stigmas. For boys the risks were different; parents were worried about bad company (gangs). Whilst there has been considerable effort to address and promote education for girls in Tanzania, there seems to be limited available literature about the relationship between gender and class repetition.

Class repetition is used as an intervention to avail pupils with additional support in their learning with consent from parents and guardians. Parents and guardians in this study appeared to use gender as an important factor when giving consents to have their children repeat a class. In most instances, parents in this study considered retaining boys to be a more worthwhile intervention compared to girls. This is reflected in the report by the President’s Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO- RALG 2016) in Tanzania, which\textsuperscript{15} attests gender parity in primary education enrolment with a total of 4,265,714 males enrolled in and 4,373,488 females. The same report shows gender disparity for those that repeated a class, with a total of 205,346 boys and 184,494 girls being retained (PO- RALG 2016)

Parents’ gender-based preferences to retain boys as opposed to girls are largely based on socio-cultural norms. It is generally and widely accepted that girls mature faster compared to boys and thus are potentially sexually active whilst still in school (Wesley \textit{et al}, 2000), increasing the possibility of early, child pregnancies that are considered a stigma to the families. PORALG 2016 report, noted that in 2015, 251 girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy, whereby 41 of these dropped from Class Five, 119 from Class Six and 77 were in Class Seven.

\textsuperscript{14} Gender in this section is used to refer to socially constructed difference in roles, behaviour, responsibilities and expectations between the two sexes where certain sex receives preference based on their socially constructed role or position. In this study, gender is used to refer to preference given when considering retaining pupils in a class often consideration for girls seemed to be biased.

\textsuperscript{15} This report was published in 2016 providing education data covering a period of five year, between 2012-2016 for pre-primary, primary, secondary, adult and non-formal education. The purpose of the report is to enable monitoring of education performance at different levels in order to improve and harmonize them (PO-RALG, 2006)
Furthermore, domestic responsibilities are entrusted to girls; they are required to help with domestic chores, look after the family home and take on care of younger children, especially when parents are working or engaged in economic activities. All of this is on the pretext that it is preparatory for girls who will get married and then become the responsibilities of their husbands.

5.3.1 STRUCTURAL AND PATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS

Patriarchal system is used here to refer to male-dominated systems, where women’s role and position in society is restricted and the division of labour is founded on societal stereotypes (Mlyakado, 2012; Rao and Sweetman, 2014). Certain cultural practices or patriarchal ideologies, such as women’s roles as wives and mothers, have been reported to deny girls equal rights to education, and influence the education and support girls receive in their learning. With the introduction of the universal free education this is changing. This supported by the government effort to promote the girl child, the 2016 PO-RALG data report shows gender parity in class one enrolment as reported in the year 2016, where standard one enrolment of children aged seven (7) year old, were 757,816 boys and 744,397 girls.

Kabeer (2005) argues that these gender related roles may result in compliance and the acceptance of the practice as the norm, especially if challenging such a stance is considered impossible or ‘carries heavy personal and social costs’ (2005:14). This might have been the case as evidenced in the study findings from interviews with parents – some of them preferred not to retain girls but to let them finish their primary education and take up caring roles in the family.

Kabeer (2005) further notes that in Africa, teachers may be dismissive of girls and encourage boys who are considered to be assertive, which she argues ‘reinforces traditional gender roles in society and acts to limit the kinds of futures that girls are able to imagine for themselves’ (2005:17).
This in part was reiterated in the study where, despite the practice of retaining pupils not being readily acceptable as an intervention, boys were reported to be more likely to be offered this intervention than girls. A report by the Equal Rights Project\textsuperscript{16}, notes that ‘male dominated hierarchies are often unaware of girls’ right to education or national policies supporting girls’ (2015:1).

Despite the fact that the decision to repeat a class was primarily teachers’ decisions with parents just giving their consent, parents’ preference to retain boys as opposed to girls is reported to have been based on the fear of girls getting pregnant while still in schools. The 2016 PO-RALG data shows pregnancy to be one of the main reasons for girls’ dropping out of school. This 2016 PO-RALG report can be seen to give credibility and justification to parents’ fear and as such, might have promoted their preference when giving their consent to have their children retained.

In response to child pregnancies, the government of Tanzania has a policy that does not allow pregnant girls to continue with their education, since they are considered to have expelled themselves and have committed a crime against morality (Stein, 2014). This policy and the stigma attached to getting pregnant while in school, might have given parents the impetus for these views and their gender preference when considering retaining their children. One could thus surmise that parents’ gender preference when considering class repetition is a response to the stigma that may be associated with girls getting pregnant while still in school. On the other hand, because of what can be thought of as laxity in the implementation of policies and laws, parents’ decisions based on gender preferences may be thought of as a protective measure where girls were being protected from the ‘shame’ of getting pregnant while still in school (PO-RALG 2016).

In male dominated societies the families may not place much significance on girls’ education. As such, girls may receive minimal support and encouragement to attend school; and even when retaining them in a class may be considered necessary for their academic progress, this may not be availed to them. The challenge might therefore be to break down structural bias and oppression faced by girls directly and indirectly. If structural, social and legal barriers

\textsuperscript{16} This is a project that is funded by Comic Relief and is managed by African Initiatives working in partnership with other organisations and people at grass root levels within the communities to implement the project components and goals. The aim is to transform boys’ and girls’ education in Tanzania.
were to be removed; perhaps parents might have no or less reason to exclude girls from education.

5.3.2 POVERTY

Poverty has been reported to be one of the causes of gender disparity in education and illiteracy. In her study Stein (2014) reports that, ‘due to economic instability, limited resources, education structure and reported patriarchal society, girls’ education may be sacrificed for the ‘greater good’ of the family, including their male siblings’ (2014).

In Tanzania, despite the implementation of universal free primary education, parents are expected to provide the children with school uniforms and stationery and to participate in development programmes in the school through financial contributions towards such school activities. Despite reported benefits (from this study) of retaining young people in their previous classes, there were also identified added costs, attributed to the private tuition classes and general costs of sending a young person to school for another year.

For most parents, one effect of having their child repeat a class was to extend their financial obligations. This was seen to be in terms of their response to their children repeating a class which was the support they offered their children by funding the extra added year.

(MacGrath, 2006),

The communities’ values systems where the study was conducted, coupled with poverty may place girls’ educational opportunities and participation at a disadvantage. As in societies with patriarchal ideology and limited resources, half of these family resources tend to be spent on boys to enable them to pursue education, whereas girls are given less (Stein, 2014) in comparison and are expected to participate in domestic and or agricultural chores to supplement the family sustenance. Inevitably this is likely to further impact on their performance and general achievement. Also, this may jeopardize girls’ future in terms of economic participation, their relationships and their self-esteem. As Kabeer (2005) notes ‘today’s inequalities are translated into the inequalities of tomorrow as daughters inherit the same discriminatory structures that oppressed their mothers’ (2005:16). There is a need to
challenge existing systems to enable girls’ equal pursuit of education and a better outcome for the benefit of the whole family and the society at large (Kabeer, 2005; Stein, 2014).

5.3.3 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS.

Social and Cultural Construction of gender roles and expectations seem to affect girls’ education. As stated in the PO-RALG 2016 report, there were fewer girls retained in a class than boys. This reinforces the fact that school systems and cultural expectations can sometimes reinforce gender stereotypes, and thus affect the level of support girls may receive in their learning. Furthermore, initiatives to promote girls’ education often seem to be centred on welfare aspects (Skelton 2005) rather than enabling them to equally participate in education and promote equal participation in the competitive labour market.

Martinez (2017); Odhiambo (2017) and Stein (2014) reported that girls may choose to drop out of school due to various social challenges, such as having to walk long distances to schools and being subjected to sexual harassment both in schools and on their way to and from school. However, Kabeer (2005) notes that having a choice means being able to have alternatives from which to choose. Based on the kind of challenges these girls may be faced with, they may not have control over their situation. As such, Rao and Sweetman (2014) noted that as a protective measure, families may decide to keep a girl from attending school.

Education, according to Stein (2014:3) ‘is the first step towards empowering youth’. In the Tanzanian context, education means economic emancipation and girls may be denied this emancipation both by their parents and the structural system at large. Empowerment for Kabeer (2005), is about being able to make choices and bring about change.

As a consequence of being denied access to education, girls are inherently limited in making choices about their lives – hence could be considered to be disempowered. As various researches have shown such as that of Mosedale, (2005), educated women have far-reaching influence in society as they oversee their children’s education and are able to make informed decisions and choices concerning them, their children and families.
There is a need to re-assess how decisions to educate children are made and put more emphasis in promoting girls’ primary education attainment thus enabling them to proceed to and complete higher education. Kabeer (2005) and Karam (2010) further note that female participation in and access to education is dependent on and governed by social relationships that determine the extent to which their potential is realised.

They argue that gender socialization is based on stereotypes of differing expectations of men and women. To facilitate equal access and empower women, Stein (2014) argues, that the focus of education initiatives should be on young girls and women. Although, this may be so, more work would need to be done to allow girls to fully participate in education and wider society as a whole.
5.4 COPING AND MANAGING CLASS REPETITION

According to Eisenberg et al (1997), Skinner et al (2007), O’Driscoll et al (2008) and Baqutayan (2015), coping is about being able to adjust or adapt to stressful, traumatic situations or events. The effects of repeating a class may have far reaching consequences, which, as observed in this study were both stressful and traumatic.

Knowing or unknowingly, young people’s coping mechanisms inevitably interact with the various components of the ecological system. At the various levels the interaction could be viewed as a causal factor and a support factor. At the macrosystem: the government’s policy on free education may have contributed to the large class sizes, which in turn had a negative effect on young people’s learning and performance. At the administrative level, both the police and the teachers worked together to manage truanting, hence keeping the young people in school which was a positive support.

The exosystems, which represent both the social and cultural beliefs, had a minimal or possibly neutral effect on young people, as they seemed to draw their support largely from the mesosystem and the microsystems through family members, teachers and friends. This indirectly or directly affected their resilience, their ability to bounce back, work hard and report some positive progress. At individual level, the young people had to deal directly with the stress related issue that resulted from being retained in a class.

5.4.1 STRESS

While several authorities define stress differently, for the purpose of this report we shall adopt Aldwin’s definition. This is in relation to the young people who were made to repeat a class. In their own words this was the most stressful situation they had experienced in their lives. Aldwin (2011) observed a correlation between stress and lifespan, arguing that stress is defined according to lifespan changes. She posits that a definition of stress needs to be considered in terms of life events to be reflective of individuals’ life stage or social roles (2011:15).
Therefore, in the context of this study, having to repeat a class can be considered to be a life event where young people were required to manage or cope with the academic challenge encountered. As stated in another study by Walinga (2014), stress requires actions to be taken to address it. Studies have found that students who repeat, experience stress from: an awareness that they are taller, larger and more physically mature than their younger classmates; they miss their friends who moved on to the next year level; that notwithstanding the insensitive and negative comments by family and community members; boredom from repeating similar tasks and assignments also contribute to their stress (Smith & Shepard, 1988, 1986). In the context of this study, repeating a class could be said to have been a significant event that required young people not only to respond to the decision of being retained, but also to adjust and adapt to their new respective classes.

5.4.2 COPING

Coping is dependent on stress; where stress is said to be an unpleasant experience based on individuals’ perception of self and physical, psychological or environmental demand; coping is about managing that unpleasant experience in individuals’ life (Baquotayan, 2015). As the findings have highlighted, repeating a class was a difficult experience for these young people, as they had to cope not only with the academic consequences of being held back but also the stigma - both at school and at home - of having to repeat a class. In this context, young people’s adaptation to changes might have been extended to various aspects of their lives.

Since Bronfenbrenner calls for an understanding of individuals within their environmental and ecological context and the influence of these various ecological systems on their lives; coping could be considered to be dependent on the social-ecological context individuals are in. Therefore, it needs to be conceptualised as part of a complex system that includes stress, resilience and competence that is engaged in resolving a stressful relationship or interaction between individuals and their environments (Compas et al, 2001: Skinner et al, 2007).
Skinner et al (2007) observed coping preferences in young people as: support seeking, problem solving, escape, and distraction. In this study, young people’s coping strategies or mechanisms were established through interviews conducted with both young people and their parents. Findings from this study point to four types of coping that young people seemed to have adopted at different times or concurrently while going through the experience of repeating a class. These were:

i) Helplessness,
ii) Social withdrawal,
iii) Support seeking and
iv) Taking direct action.

5.4.2.1 Coping strategies

Coping has two main functional categories, problem-focused or emotion-focused coping. The problem-focused coping is dealing with the problem one is facing, and emotion-focused coping regulates emotions being experienced (Baqtayan, 2015).

As a process, coping is ongoing and dynamic where different coping strategies can be used interchangeably in response to external or internal demand. This could be appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person (Compass et al, 2001; Haley & Jang, 2002). Based on these study findings, young people have used coping strategies that are both problem-focused and emotion-focused in dealing with and managing their experience of repeating a class.

Compas et al (2001) differentiates coping from resilience, positing that coping is the process of adapting to stress whereas resilience is the reflection of the successful outcome of coping with stress. The findings indicate that, one cannot deduce a theme to surmise young people’s resilience in the face of this experience, despite reports of perceived benefits of repeating a class.
Some of the participants’ continued resentment (that was noted during interviewing) draws attention to their hesitant acceptance of the experience due to lack of alternative to the decision made. It appears therefore that these young people responded to repetition and the overall experience by making adjustments to enable them to get through this experience.

5.4.2.1 Helplessness

Despite what could be said to be a process of coping amid reports of acceptance; there is an observed resentment and what has been termed as reluctant or deceptive acceptance. Both Skinner et al (2007) and Compas et al (2001) observed coping to be multidimensional and can serve many different functions. This could have been the case in this study where keeping quiet or deceptive acceptance was a young person’s way of dealing with the situation. This, in Tanzanian cultural practices, is a way of accepting authority.

As demonstrated in this study, young people adopted acceptance, silence, isolation and avoidance as coping mechanisms. They felt helpless as they could not challenge their parents and teachers. Hence the coinage of the term ‘deceptive acceptance’ that describes a veiled and ambivalent acceptance. Young people were not in agreement or happy; as such, avoidance and denial was identified as a coping mechanism. It is what people do to deal with difficulties or problems in life, whether to prevent, avoid or control stress to maintain their well-being (Haley & Jang, 2002; Skinner et al, 2007).

5.4.2.2 Social withdrawal

In this study, young people faced the challenge of being laughed at or stigmatized for repeating a class. The majority of them reported to have responded to this challenge by initially withdrawing from social interactions, both at school and at home. In school, this was seen as a coping mechanism to avoid being laughed at or faced with seeing their former friends in groups of higher classes while the retained young person felt alone, not having
friends. As such, withdrawing was seen to be a way of dealing with these difficulties. Miller and Kaiser (2001) refer to this as avoidance coping.

They note this kind of coping to involve physical and, or social withdrawal or disengagement from stigma-related stressors; which in this case would have been the public identification and label as a retained pupil. This approach to coping could be considered as an individual’s avoidance of the problem, which Baquitayan (2015) believes to be one of the emotion-focused coping strategies; Skinner et al (2007) construe coping in a context that considers it as being both able and unable to manage or regulate stress. Many retained students have social difficulties with their new younger peers (Byrnes, 1989; Shephard & Smith 1990) and many are teased about repeating a class (Small 1997).

In some cases, young people refused to explore or reflect on what they felt at the time they were repeating a class. They reported this to have been a painful reminder of the hurt experienced and reflecting on it was considered to be bringing up old feelings that they had suppressed. This avoidance of even discussing the issue seemed to help them cope with the memory of their experience. The social disruption caused by repeating appears to contribute to poor long-term social adjustment (Eide & Showalter, 2001). Retained student tended to be isolated in school setting or preferred to play with their old class mates.

A study by Byrnes (1989) found that most students regarded repeating as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive intervention that adults recommend to help them. Students who repeat also reported feeling very fearful of the social changes that they anticipated will occur for instance loss of established friends and social connections, having to get to know and get along with new students, and the need to find a social place in the new class group. Students who are already socially under-confident faced the challenges of being relocated into a new social setting where their social skills were even less effective and their social status even lower than before.

For some young people these effects resulted in truanting; and this could have been both a conscious or unconscious coping strategy where they avoided facing the various challenges alluded to above.
5.4.2.1.3 Anger, Denial and Displacement

The findings of this study demonstrate that young people seem to have dealt with the experience of class repetition by going through anger and denial. They often tended to view the decision to have them repeat a class as unfair and thus detached themselves from taking responsibility, which subsequently led to them withdrawing from their parents, while disguising their discontent over the decision.

They did not seem to take responsibility for their part and rather displaced the responsibility on decision makers. Despite most of these young people having been through this experience more than two years ago, their anger towards both teachers and their parents seemed to be ongoing. This might explain some of the negative behaviours like truanting.

5.4.2.1.4 Support seeking

Despite their presented anger, denial and withdrawal at having to repeat a class young people also sought moral, emotional and educational support from their friends. Support-seeking is a potentially adaptive strategy that children use when they encounter problems too difficult for them to solve by themselves (Karabenick, 1998; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Nelson-Le Gall, Gumerman, & Scott-Jones, 1983; Newman, 1991, 1994; Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). A second perspective, emerging from literature regards the adoption of adult models of coping to children, focusing on help-seeking as a family of coping strategies (Compas, 1987; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Murphy & Moriarity, 1976; Wolchik & Sandler, 1997). From this viewpoint, children going to others for help, advice, and support can be adaptive when demands outweigh personal resources; in fact, support-seeking is one of the most common ways of coping used by both children and adults.

Using cooperative learning strategies as a method to offer support has been considered as a coping strategy, used by teachers in the classroom environment (Murdoch & Wilson 2004). When individuals are faced with or experience stressful situations, they seek help or support
in managing the stress or in addressing it. Student–teacher relationships and the more social self-system processes in shaping the use of support-seeking, indicate close relationships with teachers would be a pathway toward support-seeking bringing out of concealment students with a low sense of competence (Ryan et al., 2001).

Aldwin (2011) argues that while avoidant coping is observed in middle school children (between the age of 6 and 9 years), adolescents are noted to be more likely to cope by seeking support from siblings and friends. Study findings show young people’s discontent over the level of support received from both teachers and parents.

Skinner and Pitzer (2012) posit that children’s peer friendships have a positive effect and influence motivation and achievement in school. Skinner and Pitzer’s observation can be translated in this study to reflect the support and motivation that young people reported to have received from their friends at the time they were repeating. However, there were also occasions where the young people were laughed at.

There is a link between coping and transactional interactions individuals have with those around them and their surroundings in general. Furthermore, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) note the importance of teachers’ support in individual learning. They argue that teachers are able to ‘facilitate students’ engagement and constructive coping directly through their own actions and modelling in the classroom’ (Skinner and Pitzer, 2012:36). However, this may not be possible in the Tanzanian context due to the huge workload the teacher has to deal with leaving little room for creativity and just focusing on completing the syllabus.

5.4.2.1.5 Taking Direct Action

In response to being laughed at some young people withdrew and isolated themselves from those that were laughing at them. This can be seen to be a conscious effort, an action that young people took to deal with the situation. Although this may be seen as an emotion-focused strategy, it is an action that some young people took in order to cope with their
experience. Further to this, other young people reported seeking advice from parents and, or reporting to teachers about being laughed at.

These were direct actions that young people took to address the challenge they were experiencing at the time, irrespective of whether teachers and parents’ responses were of help or not. Since coping is a regulatory conscious effort in response to stressful conditions, taking a purposeful action by either seeking advice or to report being laughed at can be considered as mechanisms these young people used in managing and coping with the situation.

Also, another response to the experience of repeating a class, young people reported to have sought help from tuition teachers and their friends. Tuition attendance was provisioned for by their parents, as such, their involvement cannot be considered to have been a direct action taken. However, seeking support from their friends and peers for the purpose of managing their experience of repeating a class and addressing the cause of their retention (seeking academic help) can be considered to be a strategy that not only helped with their coping but also managed their experience and assisted with their learning. This is in line with Baqutayan (2015) who argues that at the most fundamental level, resiliency and coping research validates prior theory in human development that has clearly established the imperative for growth and improvement and a sense of purpose and belief in a bright future (goal direction, educational aspirations). Baqutayan implies that taking direct action in seeking help is a coping strategy for managing unfavourable circumstances and that it is not a genetic trait that only few children possess, rather, it is our natural capacity for coping, self-righting and for dealing with transformation and change. A capacity that is nurtured and influenced by our surrounding environments.
CHAPTER 6: RESPONDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section responds to the research questions that the study had set out to explore.

6.1 WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD TO REPEAT CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL?

As observed earlier, the perception of young people on class repetition was varied. Class repetition is perceived to be a good thing based on the benefits it avails young people in their learning and general education outcome but at the same time, it is perceived negatively. The negative perception was mostly due to the non-involvement in making the decision and in the way the news of repeating a class was delivered, not giving young people time to come to terms with the decision.

It was noted that for the experience to have had a less negative impact on young people, participation in the process of decision making and sharing of information prior to the decision to retain them, would have helped young people to deal with the outcome.

Being involved in the process of decision-making, -in discussions about academic progress, concerns and actions to be taken- enables and empowers young people in knowing what to expect, when and why. They can then self-monitor their progress and mentally prepare themselves for the possibility of being retained. As much as repeating a class is not a desired outcome, young people call for partnership in assessment and in the process of decision-making.

6.2 CAN THE DOCUMENTED PERCEPTIONS BE USED TO GENERATE A FUNCTIONAL THEORETICAL MODEL?

Young people’s perceptions seem to be influenced by how the decision was made, which had implications for their accepting and dealing with it. This can be considered as a starting point
in developing a functional theoretical model that can explicitly address young people’s observations, views and opinions. Children are ‘products’ (Neal and Neal, 2013) and are equally characterised by both ‘input’ from surrounding ecological systems and those inhabiting these systems and ‘output’ from children themselves, their contributions to the interaction with those systems around them.

Therefore, this study proposes a theoretical model that is child-centred; where every child is treated as an individual, and their understanding and viewpoints are listened to. The majority of young people that were retained attended Madrasa and reported not to have struggled with their learning while in Madrasa. They noted this to have been because in Madrasa, lessons are tailored to address individual levels and thus there was no pressure or fear of being retained since children moved levels according to their pace. From these observations, a theoretical model is suggested below (figure 2), that draws from different aspects of the child’s life while at the same time ensuring that the child remains at the centre of the intervention. This model may encourage children to learn, rather than perform to meet score targets and thus putting pressure to meet such expectations.
Below is a table that offers a summarised description of the model presented above, highlighting the different aspects of the child’s life and the input into the various systems.
Table 5: Description of the various systems on the proposed model in Figure 2 above.

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<td>3</td>
<td>CHANGES NEEDED</td>
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<td>MADRASA</td>
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The model is a bottom up approach that is informed or is founded based on the child’s needs and input. It starts by looking at the needs of the child and how learning or school input can be informed by these needs. Then, school intervention, assessments, and decisions are thus informed by the child’s ‘output’ that is a result of interaction between the child and their ecological systems.

Schools are then engaged in interactions with policy makers to inform policy of what works, changes that are needed to address children’s needs and schools’ roles, and how both policies and school institutions can work together to promote children’s learning within their context.
Policy makers then engage with national and international statutes to ensure these are properly and clearly translated, to avoid subjectivism or constructed interpretations. Furthermore, there should be committees that govern, monitor and evaluate translation of these legal statutes, to assist their interpretation in local policies and act as quality assurance bodies ensuring provisions are clearly translated in relevant policies as well as being observed and practiced.

In this model children’s microsystems and mesosystems are networked. Decisions made feed to the exosystems which in turn feeds into the macrosystems. This allows decision made at one level to feed into the next level. The focus is for decisions to be informed by children’s input and perspectives.

6.3 WHAT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS CAN BE MADE TO BENEFIT THE AFFECTED YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE SYSTEM AT LARGE?

Every child is an individual and, despite limited availability of resources, various interventions can be tailored to address differing learning needs while taking into account the different systems surrounding young people and their interactional influence on each other. Below are the recommendations that have been suggested to help address challenges identified from the experience of these young people of repeating a class:

❖ A Participatory approach to assessment of the child’s capacity, needs to be put in place. This is in line with what seemed to be the discontent over the overall assessment and process of decision-making. It should be ensured that the young people appreciate fully that all the decisions made are based on assessment outcomes and identified learning is made in their best interest in order to promote learning.

❖ A tripartite approach to assessment should be introduced involving teachers, parents and young people- promoting participation from both young people and their parents in providing an insight into young people’s family background and other factors that
may impact on their learning. This will not only facilitate an assessment that is all encompassing but also offers teachers an opportunity to understand young people beyond classroom and school settings and thus ideally adopt an approach that can address confounding multiple-factors in young people’s learning.

- Regular meetings between teachers, struggling pupils and their parents. This will be in the form of ongoing monitoring that will engage in a three-way communication. Identifying and addressing pupils' weaknesses and strengths could be the best approach for all involved and would benefit pupils more and minimize the impact that class repetition has on pupils. This could be through progress review meetings, as reports or assessments produced either termly or annually do not necessarily indicate the level of learning, rather they provide a snapshot of achievement based on grading at that particular time. Through progress review meetings, parents and teachers can chart progress, which interventions are working and how and whether to change them.

- Progress alerts. Schools should have a policy where there are regular progress alerts. This should include teachers alerting pupils of the possibility of having to repeat a class based on their progress monitoring and evaluation of targets and action plans set previously during progress meetings. Prior warning is an initial intervention as this would have necessitated an 'action plan'.

- Additionally, alternative intervention needs to be based on pupils' abilities academically and intellectually. There need to be mandatory examinations that the child must pass, and special effort put to assist them in the same. This is to enable whatever intervention is offered to help the individual and promote their learning.

- Alternative ways to address the needs of struggling pupils need to be identified. The key is to address the problem or pupil's weakness early and design an intervention mechanism tailored to addressing the problem unique to that individual pupil.

- Teachers to engage and seek the experiences of those that have repeated a class in order to gain an understanding that will; help to evaluate the effectiveness of the practice, the support offered to the pupils and the effectiveness of the outcome.
Flexible approaches to be used when engaging children. Since the young people in the study had three different learning approaches - school, Madrasa and tuition learning - it may be beneficial to investigate further the viability of employing a flexible teaching approach where various techniques can be borrowed from both Madrasa and tuition teaching styles.

Further research is needed to gather more information on the gender disparity when retaining pupils in classes, to explore the reason for this and what measures can be put in place to achieve gender parity and promote greater participation of girls in education.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were several constraints to this study that emerged once the project commenced. The process to have the research approvals following the chain of command was exceptionally time consuming.

There was also language challenge as the interviews were conducted in Kiswahili and translated into English. This proved to be a challenging task as often it was difficult to translate nuances, while ensuring evidence was not lost in translation and meanings were closely preserved to reflect the context.

As the study was confined to three schools chosen deliberately, it was felt the school may not give an accurate reflection of the existing cultures in other schools in other educational districts, thereby hindering generalizations from the study from being applicable on a wider scale. This was further made difficult in instances where parents consented to participating and allowed young people to be interviewed and later asked not to be interviewed, instead for the researcher to use data obtained from their children. Consequently, these interviews were disregarded necessitating a further recruitment process amidst the data collection phase.

Furthermore, since the researcher was new at the schools involved in the study, a “stranger”; it was felt that this would have given rise to "Heisenberg effect" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).
This is a situation where the interview participants provide responses they think the researcher wants to hear or is “looking for”.

Furthermore, due to the researcher being both an insider (being from the same country thus familiar with the education system and culture) and an outsider (in the context of participants’ lifestyle, neighbourhoods and living experiences), it was difficult at times to challenge participants especially when it was felt information given did not ring true. Challenging participants felt as if the researcher would be making assumptions especially as those assumptions were mostly informed or were around participants’ social economic statuses. Also due to confidentiality and established trust amongst participants and researcher, it was difficult to directly clarify information (with either young people or their parents depending who the information was from and who needed to clarify it) - which researcher may have felt did not ring true or wanted to further follow up. This meant having to pose questions or challenging participants under the guise of it being a general observation. Researcher had to constantly be aware of the differences in social economic status and how this could influence participants’ responses and as such, had to constantly ensure she consciously checked her interactions with participants and integrate herself with participants during the interviews so as not to put participants on the defensive or make them feel they needed to prove something and inherently provide responses that were either biased or that they felt the researcher needed to hear or needed to impress her.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Although considering the Tanzanian government’s effort to provide universal free primary school education, the resultant increase in class enrolment appears to have compromised the quality of education as reported by (Kumburu, 2011; Rono, 2012; Schipper et al, 2014; Uwezo Tanzania, 2014).

There has also been a marked decline in pass rates both at basic primary and secondary education level, despite various government efforts such as the Big Results Now (BRN) initiative. In response to this education problem, repeating a class is considered as an intervention to avail children with the support needed. Despite this practice being discouraged PMO – RALG (2014) data shows it is on the increase even with various efforts to improve pupils learning and educational achievement.

This study sought to find out young people’s experiences of repeating a class, their perception of the practice, challenges faced, support received at the time of repeating and how they coped with whatever difficulties they experienced.

Findings indicate young people’s perception of class repetition varied, but many thought the practice to have been helpful. However, it was an experience that almost every young person felt they would not like to go through again, nor one that they would have chosen to take. Often there were reports of being angry and sad in response to the decision of being retained.

There was also a sense of helplessness from these young people, as they noted they were unable to influence or change a decision that had already been made, nor could they challenge their parents and teachers based on their cultural upbringing. Therefore, repeating a class was despondently accepted because there was nothing these young people felt they could have done. The term ‘deceptive acceptance’ describes these young people’s false presentation of accepting the decision to repeat a class while not happy or in agreement with it.

Findings showed that young people maintained this deceptive acceptance, with parents believing their children had embraced the decision, appreciating the benefit and help it
availed them. Young people felt it was irrelevant for both teachers and parents to know how they felt about their experience of repeating a class, since this would not have made a difference - they did not have a choice but to accept and do what was expected.

The decision to retain children in class was not participatory; rather this was agreed between teachers and parents without considering young people’s opinions or feelings. Despite how young people felt about repeating a class, being involved in the process of making the decision could have helped young people accept and come to terms with the outcome of the decision, while it would also have provided them with prior knowledge of what was to come and enable them to seemingly maintain a sense of control over it.

Participation as a right has been advocated in various statutes, though there is still work to be done to effectively involve children in matters concerning them. As the study found, young people preferred to be involved in the decision even if their involvement would not have changed the outcome.

Furthermore, decisions about retaining children seemed to have been due to assessment outcomes that focused mainly on educational achievement. Individuals, as it has been observed, are best understood within their surrounding ecological systems and the transactional interaction between them and the various systems surrounding them.

Although the study did not set out to establish reasons for repeating a class, these were nevertheless found to have lacked a holistic consideration. There is an interrelationship between individuals and their surroundings, in that both influence each other equally. Decision to retain pupils in class did not appear to consider the possible effect that young people’s learning environment, neighbourhoods, friends or family situations might have had on their learning. Although decisions appeared to be based either on skills capabilities or examination results, learning environments were often found not to have been considered in the assessment or decision making.

Parental consent to retain young people has also been observed to be influenced by gender. Socially constructed roles that girls and women are given seem to still be deeply ingrained, with girls’ preference mirroring that of their parents- namely to proceed with the uptake of domestic and caring roles.
Girls’ level of maturity is also seen to be a factor that worked against them. Again, these decisions and views were not inclusive or did not reflect girls’ opinions. The study did not categorically set out to establish this nor were young people asked their opinion regarding parental preference. However, parents’ decisions did not involve the young people.

Gender preference was not limited to parents’ consent; rather it was deep-rooted within society. Various literature have noted teachers’ directly and indirectly discrimination against girls which inherently will affect their overall learning outcome, their continuance to secondary education or completion.

The stress resulting from the experience of having to repeat a class has been likened to that of losing a parent (Anderson et al, 2005; Jimerson et al, 2006). Young people’s responses to the decision were varied but had similar manifestations; to manage the experience and any challenges presented by it.

The majority of these young people experienced being laughed at, being isolated, losing friends, having to make new friends, and having to work hard to avoid being retained again. Whether young people experienced one, all or none of these mentioned, they still had to adjust and adapt to their new classes and manage learning with different peer group. As such, they had to cope with the situation, which left them with little choice.

Once decisions had been made, young people had to repeat a class whether they liked it or not and as such had to find ways to deal with their feelings and their learning to ensure they avoided being retained further. There were no defined coping strategies and every individual managed differently, depending on their surrounding systems and support networks. It did not matter whether mechanisms engaged were positive or negative, provided they suited the purpose and enabled young people to deal with their situation.

Although coping may not necessarily follow a pattern, these young people employed coping strategies that had some similarities. They reported being helpless following the decision to retain them, having neither control nor power to challenge it; as such they despondently accepted it. In dealing with this despondent acceptance and other challenges, they withdrew
and isolated themselves. This was considered a coping mechanism that enabled them to avoid those that had made the decision, as well as those laughing at them or upsetting them.

These two coping mechanisms seem to have been used initially following the news of having to repeat a class. After that young people seemed to take direct action to deal with difficulties faced, including consciously seeking help in addressing these challenges. These approaches seemed to have helped these young people through their experience. Despite this experience being over two years ago for some of these participants, there was observed resentment towards teachers and parents for retaining them and for not involving them in making the decision.

Dealing with and managing trauma can take time and focusing on the benefits or academic outcome, undermined the pupils’ experience and their psycho-social well-being. Although the young people’s resilience was related to the tuition intervention that made them work hard and improve their grades, this support provided an expanded circle of interaction hence drawing support from both the social and ecological factors surrounding them. Appreciating and understanding the interrelationship between various strategies can be used to help foster resilience and inherently achieve a balanced outcome both academically, emotionally and socially.

Although the study’s original theoretical framework was nested on resilience and how individuals’ interactions with their environment and surrounding systems fostered buoyancy in the face of adversity, the young people in the study did not seem to have recovered from their experience, rather they seemed to have adapted various coping skills to manage the experience.

Resilience is defined as the ability of individuals to absorb shock or trauma and bounce back (Greenberg, 2006; Eriksson et al, 2010; Cote & Nightingale, 2012; Masten, 2014); these young people did not seem to have fully bounced back emotionally or psychologically. They had, instead, managed to cope with repetition and be promoted to other classes, but remained angry and resentful at the decision made rather than considering this as a life experience and learning from it.
Coping, on the other hand, is about adjusting and adapting to stressful situations - these adjustments can be about being able or unable to manage or regulate stress (Skinner et al, 2007). However, it has been established that coping also depends on individuals’ interactions with and influences from their ecological systems despite not being able to link or relate to resilience aspect or part of the initial or original theoretical framework to young people’s experience of repeating a class. Ecological system theory has a direct transactional interaction, not only in influencing learning and decision making but also in facilitating coping and ensuring that future intervention plans are holistic and multidimensional.

The practice of class repetition or holding back students is reported to be an age-old practice in both developed and developing countries (Brophy, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008; Tingle et al, 2012). The practice is based on the understanding that if students were unable to master work of the current class they are in, moving to the next class would prove too challenging. Thus, to be well equipped to move to the next class and gain the necessary academic credentials the students are required to repeat the class (Ndaruhutse, 2008; Välijärvi, 2008; Jacob & Lefgren, 2009). Class repetition is said to serve two purposes, to improve the academic performance and to help those who are emotionally immature develop (Jimerson et al, 2006; Ndaruhutse, 2008).

However, as noble as this may seem, the young people affected perceive themselves as helpless. As a result, the process of repeating a class leads to several emotional and psychological issues; besides having to deal with the stigmatisation of repeating, they had to deal with feelings of helplessness, anger, denial and disappointment- they felt that the very people they could rely on had disappointed them.

Since the young people that were interviewed were still in primary school education, follow up research is needed to ascertain how well they progressed in their learning and whether they attained the required grades in their examinations to enable their entry into higher education. This would inform policy makers and teachers as to whether the practice of retaining pupils is an effective intervention.
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TO
THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER
TEMEKE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
DAR ES SALAAM

My name is Oliver Kishebuka, I am a PhD student at the University of Bristol. I am conducting a study that looks at young people’s experience of repeating a class in primary schools in the Temeke district. In particular I would like to know how they view class repetition decisions, the effects of it, and what they perceive to be the benefits or impacts of this on their lives. I would like to talk to these young people and their parents face to face in order to hear what they have to say.

I am writing to you to ask for your assistance in providing me with the names of schools that have high incidence of class repetition in your district. If you could also give me some assistance in recruiting schools and prospective participants to the study, that would also be extremely helpful.

I would particularly like to involve the young people who are in their final year of primary education and have repeated a class on one or more occasions.

I attach a university introductory letter and my ethics approval letter.
Thank you very much for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below if you have any further queries or need clarification.

Sincerely,

Oliver M. Kishebuka
University of Bristol
School for Policy studies
8 Priory Road
Bristol BS8 1TZ
United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0)117 954 6755
Fax: +44(0)117 954 6756
Email: ok13436@bristol.ac.uk
INFORMATION SHEET FOR HEAD TEACHERS

TITLE OF THE STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF CLASS REPETITION IN TANZANIA

Why have you been contacted?
I have contacted you because as a head teacher you are in a position to help me access young people in class six or seven who have had to repeat a class in the last three years of their primary school education. I would like to give them a chance to tell me what their experiences are that might be beneficial both to my study and you as teachers in facilitating their learning.

What will happen if you agree to help or support?
If you agree to help me with this study, I will then send you information about the study for both young people and their families. I will ask you to pass this information to all young people and their families that meet the study inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria are; young people in class six to seven of primary education within Temeke district, they need to have repeated a class in the last three years of their primary school education and are at least thirteen to fourteen years old.

I will ask you to pass on an information sheet about the study and a reply slip. If they are interested in participating in the study, I will ask parents to return the expression of interest form to you in a sealed envelope. I will collect these envelopes from the school. I will then randomly select the number of young people I need and contact them upon my arrival in Tanzania to set up a meeting.

Where and when will the meeting take place?
Before I meet with parents and young people, I would like to meet with you first so that we can discuss interview arrangements. Then I will contact parents and young people and arrange to meet them to discuss the study and answer their questions. If after this meeting both parents and the young people are happy to take part in the study, then I will set up interview appointments and venues depending on parents’ and young people’s preference. If a young person chooses to have the interview in school, then I will request this from you in good time. In case families incur any expenses in attending the interviews, I will reimburse travel costs and any other associated costs.

Will you know what has been discussed?
All that will be discussed in the interviews will be kept private between myself and the young person (or families) unless there are concerns over participant’s or another person’s safety. Data and young person’s details will be confidential. This is in accordance with the Data Protection Act of England which requires me to keep everything about the research and its participants confidential and not discuss the research or its participants with anyone else. I will use data gathered to write my dissertation report which will be submitted to the University of Bristol. Names of young people and their families, their personal details and schools they attend will not be mentioned.

**What is the point of taking part?**
I will be able to learn a lot from the perspectives of young people and the experiences they have of having to repeat a class. By taking part young people will get a chance to have their views presented which will help to better understand their experiences and how to work with them or help them.

**Are there any less good things about taking part?**
Due to this study taking place during term time, it may be difficult to find time for interviews. I will try to find time that is agreeable to both the young person and their families. For interviews scheduled to take place at school this would mean conducting interviews during young people’s lunch breaks, after school hours or on weekends. I will reimburse travel costs and any other associated costs to families or to school personnel who stay behind after school hours or come on weekends to facilitate and provide access to the arranged office.

**If you have further questions**
If you have a question or want more information, you can contact me via email on ok13436@bristol.ac.uk (Oliver Kishebuka). Or you can contact my supervisors Dr Pauline Heslop on pauline.heslop@bristol.ac.uk and Dr Sandra Dowling on s.dowling@bristol.ac.uk.

**What will happen next?**
If you agree for me to carry this study in your school, please respond to my email confirming your decision and provide me with your contact number so I can contact you when I arrive in Tanzania. Once I have received your email confirming your taking part, I will then send you study information for young people and for their parents. Once parents have read the study information sheet and are interested in taking part, they can then fill in a reply form (which will be their expression of interest) and send it back in a sealed envelope to me through you. I would ask you to securely keep this until my arrival in Tanzania.
Dear Head teacher,

My name is Oliver Kishembuka; I am a PhD student at the University of Bristol in UK. I am interested in learning and understanding young people’s experience of repeating a class in primary school, particularly on how they view class repetition decisions, the effects of it, and what they perceive to be the benefits or impacts of this on their lives. I would like to talk to these young people face to face to hear their views and opinions about repeating a class so that I can understand their experiences.

I am writing to you to ask for your help and assistance in being able to access young people who have repeated a class at one time in their primary school education. More specifically, I would like to speak with young people in class six to seven in your school who have repeated a class in the last three years. I would be grateful if you could please be kind enough to support and assist me in getting in touch with these young people and their families. I will reimburse participants’ transport and all associated costs so that families or school personnel do not have to use their resources for taking part in the study.

I attach a university introductory letter and my ethics approval letter.

If you have young people who have repeated a class at your school and you would like more information or to assist me in accessing them, please contact me on the email below. I will send you more information about my research and some reply forms (expression of interest forms) that you can pass on to the young people who meet my criteria and their families.

Thank you very much for your time and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries or need clarification.

Sincerely,

Oliver M. Kishembuka
University of Bristol
School for Policy Studies
8 Priory Road
Bristol BS8 1TZ
United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0)117 954 6755
Fax: +44(0)117 954 6756
Email: ok13436@bristol.ac.uk
Dear Parent(s),

My name is Oliver Kishebuka; I am a PhD (research) student at the University of Bristol in England. I will be conducting a research in Dar es Salaam with primary school young people. I am interested in learning and understanding the experience of young people (children) who have repeated a class in primary school. I would like to invite you and your child to take part in this study. I have attached an information sheet for both you and your child and I would like to ask you to read them as they offer more information about the study.

If you and your child are interested in the study and you think you might like to take part, you can fill in the reply form and I will contact you for further discussions and if you have any questions, I can answer them in this meeting.

I only need eight to ten children (and their parents). Therefore, I will have to randomly select in order to get this number fairly. This is also explained in the information sheets. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver M. Kishebuka
University of Bristol
School for Policy Studies
8 Priory Road
Bristol BS8 1TZ
United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0)117 954 6755
Fax: +44 (0)117 954 6756
Email: ok13436@bristol.ac.uk
PARENTS’ REPLY FORM

TITLE OF THE STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF CLASS REPETITION IN TANZANIA

PLEASE READ THE ‘INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS’ BEFORE YOU FILL IN THIS FORM.

Please tick the box of the statement you agree with and return in a sealed envelope to the head teacher or the teacher that gave it to you.

1. I would like to find out more about the study and I am interested in myself and my child taking part

2. I am not interested in my child or myself taking part in the study

Parent’s Name: ___________________________________________

Parent’s Signature: _________________________________________

Child’s Name: ____________________________________________

Child’s School Name _______________________________________

If you would like to find out more about the study, or think that you might like to take part, please tell me how I can contact you stating your preference.

Home [ ] Work [ ]

Telephone Number: ______________________________________
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

TITLE OF THE STUDY: YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE OF CLASS REPETITION IN TANZANIA

My name is Oliver Kishebuka; I am a PhD student at the University of Bristol in UK. I am interested in learning and understanding young people’s experience of repeating a class in primary school, particularly how they view class repetition decisions, the effects of it, and what they perceive to be the benefits or impacts of this on their lives. I would like to invite your child to take part in the study as I would very much like to hear their views since these are important in helping me understand the experience of repeating a class as a young person in Tanzania.

Why have I been invited?
You and your child have been invited to take part in this study because your child is in class six or seven of primary education and has repeated a class in the last three years.

What will happen if you agree to take part?
If you agree to take part, there is a reply form that you will have to fill in and send it back to me. Once I have these forms, I will randomly select eight to ten (8-10) young people (children) and their families (parents or caregivers) to interview. This is because I may not be able to interview everyone who has shown an interest.
If you are among those selected, I will contact you to arrange for a meeting with you and your child and go through the study information sheet. I will also ask you as a parent for your written permission for both you and for your child to take part in the study. I will also ask your child separately for their permission to take part. I will make interview appointments for the times, dates and places that you and your child feel are suitable. I will interview you and your child separately. I would like to interview your child first because this study is focusing on their experiences and views, and prior to interviewing your child will let them decide if they want someone with them in the interview or if they are happy to be interviewed alone. In the interviews I will ask both you and your child about young people’s experiences of repeating a class, such as their perception of class repetition, how they cope or manage with having to repeat a class, their views and how they feel when they have to repeat a class. I will also ask about family perception of having your child repeating a class, what this was or has been like for a family and how you managed or ‘handled’ it. Interviews will last about 1 hour.
to 1.5 hours and with your permission, I would like to record the interview conversation in order to make sure, everything said has been clearly noted.

**What will happen if you no longer decide to take part?**
Taking part in the study is completely up to you and your child, and you can both change your minds at any time and say no without having to give me a reason. After the interview you or your child will have up to 2 weeks to change your mind and I will ask you if I can still use the information you both would have already given me.

**Will other people know what has been discussed?**
All that will be discussed will be kept private between me and you or between myself and your child (no one else will know the details of what we have talked about) unless you or your child tells me something that puts you, your child or someone else’s safety at risk. In this case I would need to tell someone else but I will inform your child or you of this. I will not tell your child what we have discussed, nor will I tell you what your child has discussed with me.
I will use the information to write my report and I will make sure that I hide both your details (yours and your child’s). This means, I will not reveal your identity (yours or your child’s), the school he/she goes to or where you live. The interview records, report and any future writings will not identify you or your child as participants.

**What is the point of taking part?**
I will be able to learn a lot from your child as a young person and the experience of having to repeat a class from his/ her perspective. Also I will get to have an understanding of the child’s experience from your perspective and observations of the impact of this experience on the child and on the family as a unit. Taking part gives your child a chance to have his/ her views presented which will help understand this experience and how to work with them or help other young people (children) in this situation.

**Are there any less good things about taking part?**
Due to this study taking place during term time, it may be difficult to find time for interviews. I will try to find time that is agreeable to both you and your child. Also you or your child might find some questions or discussions to be upsetting. You both don’t have to answer questions that you may feel are upsetting. You or your child can ask to have the interview stopped without needing to give me reasons. If and when you are upset or your child is upset, I will make sure I stop the interview and support you through it until you are calm. I will reimburse travel costs and any other associated costs that your family may incur.

**What if I have a question?**
If you have a question or want more information, you can contact me on ok13436@bristol.ac.uk (Oliver Kishebuka). Or the head teacher can contact me via email. Alternatively you can pass your contact details to the head teacher and I will contact you directly.

**What will happen next?**
If you and your child are happy to take part in this study, please fill in the form given with this letter, providing your contact details and return it in a sealed envelope to the head teacher. I will then contact you to make arrangements to meet with you and your child if you have been selected.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Oliver Kishebuka, I am a student at the University of Bristol currently undertaking my postgraduate research degree. I am interested to learn and understand young people’s experience of repeating a class in primary school. This study, aims to understand the experience of repeating a class from young people perspectives and that of their families/parents. Particularly on how they view class repetition decisions, the effects, benefits or impacts of this on both the child and their families.

I am looking for children/students who are in primary school, ideally aged 12 – 13 years old and have repeated a class whether voluntary or involuntary. As well as parents/caregivers of these children. Both parents and children must mainly be able to speak Kiswahili as this is the common and national language as well as the language used to teach in primary schools.

You have been invited to take part in this research because you fit the criteria of those I am looking for and as such, I would very much like to hear your views as these are important in helping me understand the experience of repeating a class as a young person in Tanzania.

What will happen if you take part?
You will be asked to give your permission to participate in this study once you have read and understood the information given about the study. You are welcome to ask me more questions before you agree to participate. Your agreement to participating will need to be given before commencement of the study and this can be oral or written. Participation will be in form of individuals’ interviews that will be recorded upon your consent and will last between 1 hour to 1.5 hours. All that will be discussed will remain confidential (between us) and will only be used anonymously.

What will happen if you no longer decide to take part?
Participation in the study is based on your agreement (whether oral or written) which is voluntary thus it is entirely up to you to participate or not. Your participation can be withdrawn at any time within the two weeks cooling off period after the interview has been conducted and this is irrespective of whether it is the initial or follow up interview.

Anonymit
Information given in the interview will be anonymised so as to protect your identity. I’ll be the only one who knows your real identity and as such, data given will be anonymised by giving codes or pseudo names.

**Confidentiality**
All that will be discussed will be confidential. However, there is a limit to this confidentiality and at times I might have to discuss these interviews with my supervisors. In such cases I’ll endeavour to ensure anonymity unless in cases where there is risk of significant harm.
The information you provide me with in the interviews will be used to write my findings and analysis to form part of my thesis which will then be submitted for assessment. The interview transcripts, thesis or subsequent publications will not identify you as a participant.

**Researcher’s details:**
Name: Oliver Kishebuka
Email: ok13436@bristol.ac.uk
University Address: School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, 8 Priory Road, Bristol BS8 1TZ

**Supervisors:**
Dr Pauline Heslop Email: Pauline.Heslop@bristol.ac.uk
Dr Sandra Dowling Email: s.dowling@bristol.ac.uk
Who are you?

Hello! My name is Oliver; I am University student in the UK.

Why are you doing this study?
I would like to know what it’s like to repeat a year in school and how you found this experience to be like.

Why do you want to talk to me?
I would like to talk to you because you are in class six or class seven of primary school education and because you have had to repeat a class in the last three years.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Once you and your parents have decided to take part, your parents will fill in a form and send it back to me. I will pick only 8 or 10 young people. If you are one of those picked then, I will visit you and have a chat with you about your experience of repeating a class. If you want, you can have someone with you when we have our chat. Whatever you tell me will be between the two of us unless you tell me something that makes me worry about you or someone else’s safety. I will not write your name, where you live or your school.
What will I be asked to do?

I will ask you questions about your experience of repeating a class and your views. Taking part means you will be able to tell me what you think, what you feel whether good or bad and this will help me to understand this from your own views. I will record our chat so that I can make sure everything you say is noted clearly. But its ok if you would rather I don’t record.

What happens if I am worried or there is a problem?

Please tell me or your parents or someone you trust so that we can make sure we sort it out. It is ok if you change your mind and you don’t have to the reason. If you feel uncomfortable you have changed your mind, you can tell parents or someone you trust to tell me. I you agree for me to use what you have told me. I will not use it if you don’t want me to.

Will people know what I say?

No one will know what you say to me. Although I will also talk to your parents, our chat will remain private between you and me. I will only tell someone if I am worried about you or someone else’s safety. But I will inform you before I do tell someone.

What are the good things about taking part?
Taking part will really help people know and understand what it is like to repeat a class, what difficulties or benefits you feel repeating a class has in your learning.

**What are the less good things?**

I will have to meet you during your lunch break, or after school or on weekends and this takes time. I will try to make it simple so that you are not too tired or we can make plans for the best way you feel will not be tiring.

You may get upset when recalling things. We will stop our chat until you feel fine to continue or we can stop completely if you don’t feel like continuing. We can have either cards or use a code for you to let me know when you feel uncomfortable with something or you don’t want to talk about something. I will pay back all the moneys you will spend on travelling to meet me. I will give this to your parents.

**What happens after our meeting?**

I will go through with you what you have told me to check if I got it right. Then, I will write everything down in a report that I will need to give to my teachers. I will not write or tell my teachers your details. I will hide these in my report and in any writing I will have to do in future.

**Did anyone check and allow you to do this study?**

Yes. This study was given permission by a group of people at my university who checked and made sure it was ok for me to do it with young people.
What happens next?
Your parents, class teacher and head teacher know that I may ask you to take part. It is ok to talk to them about it for their support and advice. Although they won’t be able to know what you and I will talk about in our meeting. If you don’t want to take part, its ok to say no, ask your parents or teachers to tell me.

If you would like to know more or want to ask me more questions you can email me on my email address: ok13436@bristol.ac.uk or you can write your name and tell me how to contact you and put in a sealed envelope provided with this leaflet. I will contact you as soon as I am in Tanzania.

If you are happy and you want to take part, you can tell you parents and you can also let me know when I come to meet you and your family.
CONFIDENTIALITY PROTOCOL

• This study is carried out for academic purposes. Any information or data gathered will be used to write a dissertation report about young people’s experiences of class repetition.

• Young people’s and their families’ (participants’) views are highly valued as they are the basis to understanding the experiences of class repetition. Data gathered will be mainly in Kiswahili language, and translation into English will only be for the extracts of direct quotes used in the dissertation text.

• Participants’ details and any information given will be anonymised and only known to me (the researcher). Since participants’ recruitment will be through head teachers, I will randomly select participants from the list of those who expressed their interest in the study.

• Participants’ personal details and names of their schools will be given code or pseudonyms names only known to me and will be stored securely. I will make sure interview recordings are transcribed by a person who understands the principles of the Data Protection Act of England and agrees to abide by it. I will also make sure this person signs a confidentiality agreement, agreeing to: keeping study and participants’ details confidential, not discussing it with anyone else, ensuring they keep and handle interview data securely, returning everything to myself (the researcher) including rough works and ensuring data has been erased upon completion from all equipments they use.

• I will keep interview recordings until the dissertation has been submitted and examined. Interview data and participants’ information will be stored for 10 years in accordance with the University of Bristol Data Storage Policy.

• Participants will be made to understand that although I will keep everything they disclose between us, I will breach this secrecy if I am concerned over their safety or that of another person.
CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Young People’s Experience of Class Repetition in Tanzania

Please read both sections carefully and tick the boxes if you agree to you and your child taking part in the study.

SECTION 1: PARENTS’ PERMISSION FOR THEIR CHILD TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY

1. I have read/ listened and understood what the research is about and its purpose. I have also had my questions answered.

2. I understand my agreement to be voluntary and that I can withdraw my child from participation at any time and that my child is not obliged under any circumstances to answer questions especially if they feel the questions are upsetting or uncomfortable.

3. I understand that Oliver will not reveal my child’s details to anyone.

4. I know that interviews will be audio recorded. Should I wish my child not to be recorded, Oliver will take notes instead.

5. I am aware that the information provided will only be used for this study and future publications related to the study and our details will continue to be hidden.

6. I understand that Oliver will have to tell someone if my child or another person’s safety is at risk, and she will inform me of this.

7. I am ok with another person transcribing recorded interviews. I understand this person has entered an agreement with Oliver to keep my child’s details confidential.

8. I understand that my child’s details will have to be kept for 10 years according to Oliver’s University Policy (the University of Bristol Data Storage Policy) and I am ok with this.

9. I give permission for my child to take part in this study.
SECTION 2: PARENTS’ CONSENT TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

1. I have read/listened and understood what the research is about and its purpose. I have also had my questions answered.

2. I understand my agreement to be voluntary and that I can withdraw myself and my child from participation at any time and that I am not obliged under any circumstances to answer questions especially if these questions are upsetting or uncomfortable.

3. I understand that Oliver will not reveal my family details to anyone.

4. I know that interviews will be audio recorded. Should I wish not to be recorded, Oliver will take notes instead.

5. I am aware that information provided will only be used for this study and future publications related to the study and our family details will continue to be hidden.

6. I understand that Oliver will have to tell someone if I disclose information that puts me, my child or someone else’s safety at risk. I understand that Oliver will inform me of this disclosure.

7. I am ok with another person transcribing recorded interviews. I understand this person has entered an agreement with Oliver to keep our family details confidential.

8. I understand that my family details will have to be kept for 10 years according to Oliver’s University Policy (the University of Bristol Data Storage Policy) and I am ok with this.

9. I consent to taking part in the study.

Parent’s Name: __________________________________________

Parent’s Signature: _______________________________________

Child: __________________________________________________

Researcher’s Signature: __________________________________
CHILDREN CONSENT FORM
STUDY NAME: Young People’s Experience of Class Repetition in Tanzania
Please tick the boxes if you agree with what it says and you are happy to take part.

Do you know who Oliver is and why she is doing this study?
Do you understand why Oliver wants to talk to you?
Did Oliver explain to you clearly what will happen and what she may ask you?
Do you know what to do if you are worried or if you don’t want to take part or you change your mind?
Has Oliver answered all your questions?
Are you aware that Oliver will be recording what you say and you can say no to this if you don’t want her to record?
Do you know its ok to change your mind about taking part anytime you want?
Do you understand that what you tell Oliver will be private and she will not tell anyone?
Do you understand that if Oliver is concerned for your safety or another person’s safety she will have to tell someone?
Do you know that Oliver will have to write a report for her teachers about what you said but she will not write or mention your name?

Do you understand that Oliver’s University has to keep your details for 10 years?
Has Oliver offered or explained where you can get support if you need it when taking part in the study and after?

Would you be happy to take part in Oliver’s study?

If you are happy to take part, can you please write and sign your name below

Name:

Sign:
Date:
INTERVIEW GUIDE/ QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD TO REPEAT CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL?

- Age/ class repeated
- What are their views about class repetition in general (whether positive or negative)
- How they felt about it (how young people felt about having to repeat a class)
- Did they find repetition to be helpful in respect to reasons behind repetition?
- What are their thoughts about the experience (what do they think about the experience?)
- How did you feel at the time (when you had to repeat)
- What was it like
- How do you feel now
- Management (how did they manage the experience of having to repeat a class)
- Impact (What do they think or feel was the impact if any of repeating a class)
- Support received (was there any support given when they repeated? If yes, what kind of support and how effective was this in helping them manage the impact and their overall experience? If not, what kind of support do they think would have helped and how so?)
- Alternatives (Could there be an alternative to class repetition? If yes, what and how could this be helpful and why/how do they think this would be an alternative. If no, how can repetition be approached and managed)

WHAT ARE THE FAMILIES’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR YOUNG PEOPLES’ EXPERIENCES OF CLASS REPETITION?

- What are their views/ opinions on class repetition in general?
- What are their views from own experience?
- Has repetition been of help? (how do they feel this has helped?)
- Perception (how do they perceive class repetition especially where their children are concerned)
- Management (how did the family manage? and how did they support their children through it? What support was or should have been offered to both the child and family?)
- Effect (what effect or impact did repeating a class have on a family? What effect if any, does the family think this has had on the child?)
- Experience (what has the experience been like to both the child and family)
3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement

Interview participants need to be assured that the information they give will remain secure and not be shared to anyone who is not involved in the study. All data that will be gathered in relation to this study will need to be kept in accordance to the Data Protection Act of England. As someone who will have access to data of this study, you must keep this data confidential at all times.

Due to your role as a transcriber, you will need to agree to the following conditions before you can have access or work on the data. You need to agree that you will:

- Abide by the rule and values of the Data Protection Act of England
- Keep everything you see, hear and know about the study and its participants confidential
- Make sure you handle and keep interview data safe while they are in your hands and ensure they are properly password protected or encrypted
- Details of the study and its participants will not be discussed with anyone else
- Return everything relating to the study to the researcher once you finish your role as transcriber
- You will not keep any information relating to the study even if it is rough work.
- Send any information that need to be disposed to the researcher
- delete all digital information regarding the interviews from computers and any other equipment that you may have used
- If there are any concerns regarding the study or questions you will contact the researcher and discuss with her directly.

3rd Party's Signature: ___________________________  Researcher's Signature: ___________________________

3rd Party's Name: ___________________________  Researcher's Name: ___________________________

Date: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
Oliver Kishebuka
School for Policy Studies University of Bristol
8 Priory Road

Dear Oliver

Title: Young people’s experience of class repetition in Tanzania (SPSREC14-15.A57)

The School for Policy Studies Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application with regard to this project and we have received your responses to our requests for clarification. As such I am happy to provide REC approval for this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries. Yours sincerely

(on behalf of)

Ms Beth Tarleton

Chair of the SPS Research Ethics Committee