Boayue, Nuhn Monique

An Exploration of the Challenges of Access and Retention

Reintegrating Former Refugee and Internally Displaced Girls into Secondary School in Post-conflict Liberia

HØGSKOLEN I OSLO OG AKERSHUS

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Multicultural and International Education (MIE)
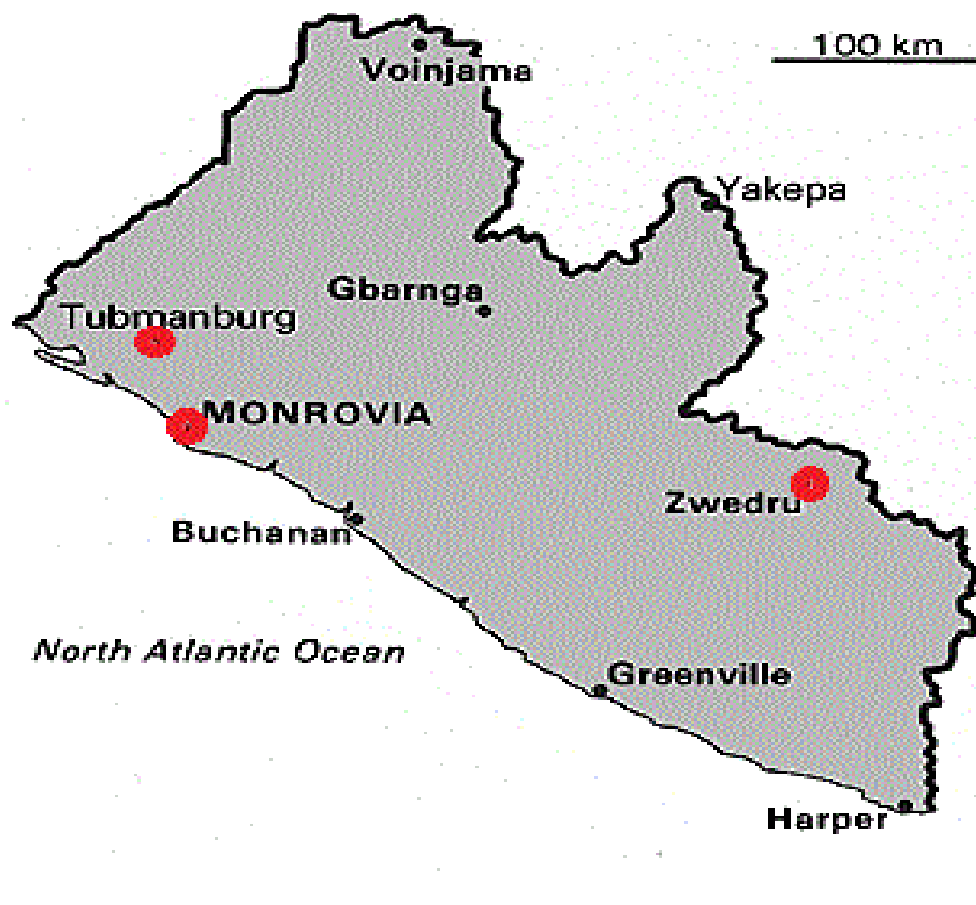
Spring 2014

Master in Multicultural and International Education

Faculty of Education and International Studies

Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

Map of Liberia

The three countries that have direct borders with Liberia are as follow:

La Cote d'Ivoire is located in the east near Zwedru, the site of the study

Guinea, Conakry is located north of Liberia

Sierra Leone is located in the west

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Associate Professor Halldis Breidlid for her continued guidance through the many phases of this thesis. Her assiduous support and direction helped me to transform my ideas into this research project.

I would also like to thank all of my dynamic professors at the Department of Multicultural and International Education at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences. Professor Anders Breidlid, Professor Halla B. Holmarsdottir, Associat Professor Kristin van der Kooij, Associate Professor Ellen Carm, Professor Joron Phil and Dr. Louis Royce-Botha, this thesis is a product of your commitments to enhance education. Please accept my sincere gratitude for all your hard work.

I am also grateful to my colleagues and friends, the Multicultural and International Education 2012-2014 cohort for their support, constructive criticism and encouragement. The academic exchanges with you as well as the social interactions were very enriching, thank you.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to my parents Charles and Ethel Boayue for their unconditional love and care. They inculcated in me a desire for knowledge and strong discipline to work without which this thesis would not have been possible. My sons Rodney and Fidel as well as my siblings, please accept my deepest gratitude for your various contributions toward this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of my informants in Zwedru and Monrovia and everybody who assisted me in innumerable ways in Liberia during my field work.

Abstract

In this thesis I have endeavored to explore former refugee and internally displaced secondary school girls' challenges of access and retention in formal school in post-war Zwedru. Using a qualitative approach supported by interviews, observations and review of official documents, I attempt to create an impression of the girls' reintegration challenges. The perceptions of secondary school girls as well as key players in the education sector are reflected in the thesis.

The education system of Liberia was a contributing factor to the 14 years of war in Liberian from 1989 to 2003. The education system which collapsed at the onset of the war is currently being reconstructed with the full participation of the international community in partnership with the Government of Liberia. In presenting the process of education reconstruction and girls' reintegration into formal school, I identify political, economic and cultural challenges as underlying factors which slow down girls' participation and completion of secondary school.

In establishing a basic theoretical framework as lens through which the focus of this thesis is examined, I take as point of departure relevant scholarly and organizational concepts as well as socialization theories and gender theories. Berger and Luckmann's primary and secondary socialization is applied in understanding and interpreting secondary school girls' upbringing and overall development. Gender theories including Amarta Sen's Capability approach are at the core of the discussions on gender and education. I use Paulo Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* to interpret the point of view and comportment of the secondary school girls in the study.

The new reforms in education in post-war Liberia as well as the educational interventions in Zwedru specifically are examined as context(s) within which girls' educational processes are taking place. The international community's commitment towards reinvigorating education in Liberia includes various programs and initiatives which are geared towards capacity building and construction of a sustainable education sector in contemporary Liberia. I draw attention to traditional gender roles as well as girls' socio-economic environment as being among the challenges which hinder girls' full participation and completion of secondary school. I also highlight that education reconstruction at the secondary level is dawdling due to various challenges faced by the Ministry of Education, this includes funding and limited human resource.

In concluding I put forward that the Government of Liberia develop innovative strategies to fund education in the country in order to support the reconstruction of its education sector and complement the hard work of the international community. Girls account for more than half of the population of Liberia and their education is unquestionably needed in the process of reconciliation and rehabilitation. Girls' participation and completion of secondary school in Zwedru is required for the attainment of the Education for All goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American Colonization Society
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFELL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
CNN	Cable News Network
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
GNI	Gross National Income
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INEE	International Network for Education in Emergencies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LAMCO	Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company
LEITI	Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
LFF	Liberia Frontier Force
LISGIS	Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LNG	Liberian National Guard
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCSCL	National Civil Society Council of Liberia
NGO	Non-Governmental
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OGHA	Organization for Global Human Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OSI	Open Society Institute
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SWAP	Sector Wide Approaches
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TWP	True Whig Party
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Educational Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia

UPE	Universal Primary Education
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Aid Organization
WADR	West African Democracy Radio
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview of the study

Liberia is located on the West Coast of Africa; bordered to the north by Guinea, the east by La Cote d'Ivoire, the west by Sierra Leone and the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Liberia shares a similar history with another nation, Sierra Leone. Both countries were founded to host the free people of color from the US and the West Indies since the 1820s, these people are later referred to in Liberia as Americo-Liberians. The resettlement of the black people in Africa was inspired by the national politics of slavery and race in the United States at that time (Dillon, 2008). In the modern times, Liberia, *the Land of Liberty,* experienced a brutal civil war from 1989 to 2003 and is still having enduring effects of that conflict. The signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003 is giving renewed hope for Liberia. The country is currently a fragile low-income state and has a significant UN peace-keeping mission UNMIL present in the country. Turrent states that a country can be considered as a fragile situation if it corresponds to the World Bank's CPIA evaluation as low-income or has a United Nations or regional peace-keeping or peace-building mission through the last 3 years (Turrent, 2011, in Mundy and Peterson 2011, p. 170).

The education sector which collapsed at the outbreak of the war in 1989 is presently undergoing reconstruction. It is widely stated that the education system in pre-war Liberia was a contributing factor to the war (TRC, 2008; 2009). The international community alongside the Government of Liberia is working tirelessly to rebuild Liberia's education sector. Much effort and resources have been invested in the reconstruction process, but girls' participation in secondary education remains elusive. Women and girls make up 52 percent of Liberia's population of 4 million. Women and girls between the ages of 15 to 24 years of age drop out of secondary school at a higher rate than their male counterparts and they are two times or more affected by unemployment.

Various reforms are being put in place in the new education sector in contemporary Liberia. Davis states that in countries affected by conflict and fragility, there is agreement that education has some part to play, good or ill, large or small (Davis, 2011; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p. 33). This infers that the organization of education, its content, educational materials, quality as

well as the conditions under which education is disseminated are vital to the role that education can play in post-conflict and fragile situations.

The topic of this thesis has gone through a process of reflection on quite a few focus, *access and retention*, *the labor market*, as well as *societal cultures* and then ended up with *access and retention*. Importantly my thoughts remained committed to girls' and women's participation in secondary education, the aim being to gain insight into the issues surrounding girls' education in Liberia. My experiences of the changing of topic mirror the argument of Creswell in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design:* "Research begins with the focus on a certain topic, but often changes during the process of the research to reflect an improved understanding of the situation" (Cresswell, 1997, p. 19). The understanding gained from this research about secondary school girls' challenges of access and retention can hopefully improve future practices in education reconstruction in post-conflict contexts. Moreover, understanding the barriers that hinder girls' participation in secondary school can provide insights into how Education for All goals can be better achieved while promoting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The World Bank and UNESCO are the key financing institutions for education globally following the Jomtien, Thailand Conference in 1990 (Holmarsdottir, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). The Education Sector Plan (ESP) records that the World Bank and UNESCO are key players in the education sector in current Liberia (ESP, 2009). Below I present the Education for All, (EFA) movement and its goals as part of the background for this study.

1.2 Education for All (EFA)

The World Conference on EFA took place in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand; this international initiative was launched to promote education and combat poverty. Six goals were set in Jomtien to be met by 2000, they are:

1. Universal access to learning
2. Focus on equity
3. Emphasis on learning outcome
4. Broadening the means and scope of basic education
5. Enhancing the environment for learning

6. Strengthening partnership by 2000

At a later conference in Dakar, Senegal, reports revealed that many countries were far from reaching these goals. More than 1,100 participants from different countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal in April of 2000 for the World Education Forum. The participants, comprised of teachers, policy makers, prime ministers, representatives of international organizations and non-governmental agencies etc. and they adopted the Dakar Frame Work for Action. This initiative is an effort to encourage and distribute the gains of education to all people in every society by 2015. The goals set to be met by 2015 are as follow:

1. Expand early childhood care and education
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
3. Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
4. Increase adult literacy by 50 percent
5. Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015
6. Improve the quality of education

The second goal, "free and compulsory education for all at the primary level" and the fifth goal, "achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015" create a demand for secondary education. To facilitate the task of implementing the above goals, UNESCO, development agencies, the World Bank, national governments and civil society organizations were charged with the responsibility to coordinate the EFA movement in order to achieve improvement in education globally, UNESCO was reaffirmed as leading coordinator. These ambitious goals were set to guide the global community in the education arena as well as to boost the MDGs (UNESCO, 2000). In Liberia, complimentary progress has been made in revitalizing the primary education level (MOE, 2011a).

It is argued that most studies about gender and education place emphasis on the number of boys and girls in school, gender parity, giving little attention to the local realities of the school environment and the community (Holmarsdottir, 2013, in Holmarsdottiretal., 2013).Accordingto the Ministry of Education, free and compulsory education introduced in Liberia at the primary level has increased enrollment at this level but secondary education level remains largely untouched (MOE, 2011a). The focus of this study is on secondary school level, my findings

concerning secondary school girls in Zwedru will be presented in chapter 5 and discussed in chapter 6.

1.3   Objective and Research Questions

The overall objective of this study is to explore the process of education reconstruction in the post-conflict context of Liberia with emphasis on the reintegration of returnee girls in secondary school. The subject of girls' education and training is complex and may be even more difficult in the present Liberia because education in the country is almost exclusively financed by the international community. In order to obtain the overall objective of this study I have formulated the following research questions:

1. How is the Government of Liberia addressing the need to have an educated female population?
2. How are NGOs contributing to meet the educational needs of the female population?
3. What are returnee girls' challenges to access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru, and how are these challenges influenced by the wider community?

1.4   Justification of the Study

The signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003 by warring factions in the Liberian conflict ended 14 years of civil war which lasted from 1989 to 2003. Liberia is a fragile-state and relies heavily on the international community for among other things, the funding of its education sector. Reconstruction of the education system is ongoing where many international partners are collaborating with the Government of Liberia. Many reforms have been put in place in the new education system. Despite these efforts girls' participation in education at the secondary school level remains indefinable. Moreover, unemployment among girls and women between 15 to 24 years of age is two times more as compared to their male counterparts according to Liberia Labor Survey (2010). The Women's Refugee Commission (2009) records that youth unemployment is 88 %, and that there is simply no access to wage jobs for this group. Also, 56% of females have never attended formal school. The National Policy on Girls Education (MOE, 2006b) records that women and girls perform about 80% of all productive activities in rural agriculture and other sectors, yet they have not been given the basic equal rights and opportunities in human resource and educational development (p. 17).

The process of education reconstruction in contemporary Liberia has made complimentary achievement (MOE, 2011a). However, an online news agency *Front Page Africa* records that in 2013 all of 25,000 secondary school leavers who sat the entrance exam to enroll at the University of Liberia failed. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf described the education system of Liberia as "*a mess*" in a cabinet meeting with officials of her government following this result (Williams, 2013). Women's recovery and empowerment is one of the pillars for peace-building in the post-war Liberia, since quality education is a conflict prevention strategy as it promotes more enlightened problem-solving skills (Strategic Roadmap, 2013, p. 22). The TRC (2008; 2009) final reports recommend women's recovery and empowerment. However, the Strategic Roadmap (2013) states that while there are attempts to implement the TRC recommendations, these, at best, have been selective (p. 11). Secondary school girls in this study appear to be faced with various circumstances which might have influence on their participation in formal school. The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, (NUPI) states that the international response to the situation of women in Liberia remains in an indeterminate state (NUPI Working Paper, 778, 2010, p. 19).

There is general lack of knowledge about how and whether returnee girls and women reintegrate into the formal school system after conflicts have ended. There is also not sufficient knowledge about their motivation or demotivation for education, and the factors which inhibit or promote their access and retention in secondary school. It is therefore important to understand the barriers that prevent returnee girls from fully attending and completing the course of study in secondary school. Moreover, it seems relevant to explore the circumstances that constrain girls from being included in dignified income-generating activities in Liberia. Knowledge about these issues may contribute to ensuring sustainable development and peace. In addition, consideration of these challenges may provide insights into how Education for All goals and the MDGs can be better achieved in the post-conflict Liberia.

There is a lack of similar research study in Zwedru since the reconstruction of education in contemporary Liberia began as the area is often inaccessible due to difficult travel conditions and security challenges. Girls' access to and retention in secondary school in the Southeast of Liberia where Zwedru is located is "most discouraging" as compared to other areas in Liberia (MOE,

2011a). The girls in this study are mainly indigenous Liberian returnees, either former refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are resettled in Zwedru.

This study looks at the Liberian secondary education system firstly because the mass schooling promoted by the Education for All (EFA) movement creates a demand for secondary education. Secondly, secondary school is a level at which students can receive education and training that they may use to earn their livelihoods. Thirdly, lack of education and war legacy affect girls in ways that are different from boys (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Girls' challenges of access and retention, including factors within and outside of the formal schools, as well as the various coping mechanisms that girls appear to adapt are the basis of my research objective and questions. This qualitative case study seeks, describes and analyzes the way(s) in which education in Liberia is being reconstructed while considering returnee girls' processes of reintegration into secondary school.

1.5   Approach to the study

This thesis takes as point of departure relevant scholarly and organizational concepts. In addition to these, socialization theories, gender theories as well as capability theories are employed to throw light on specific issues (see chapter 3). The research design consists of interview, observation as well as review of secondary data including policy documents which will serve as sources in this study. Four students, 2 boys and 2 girls served as informants from four secondary schools to grasp an overview of their challenges, views, experiences and plans in the different schools. Additionally, principals and vice principals as well as teachers from the same schools as the students' were also interviewed in order to gain insights into the situation and the challenges. Officials from the Ministry of Education in Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia, as well as representatives of NGOs in Zwedru were also interviewed because of their juxtaposition to the education system. NGOs are implementing partners of various programs in Zwedru. Details of these interviews will be elaborated in the findings and discussion in chapters 5and 6 respectively.

1.6   Structure of the Thesis

I have attempted to present a general overview of the study in chapter 1. Chapter 2 describes the background and contextual framework of the study. It looks at the situation of formal education in pre-war Liberia as well as the concept of repatriation. Then it further explores contemporary

Liberia, the political, social and economic situations of the country to give an overview of the context of present Liberia since education takes place in a wider context which may influence girls' education. The reconstruction of education in contemporary Liberia is presented before presenting Zwedru, the site of this study. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of the thesis, including socialization theories, gender theories and capability theories along with other relevant concepts. Chapter 4 provides the details of the methodology that was employed in the study; including the position of the researcher as insider and outsider. The findings of the study are presented in chapter 5 and include girls' challenges to access and retention. Discussion of the findings is presented in chapter 6, and then chapter 7 provides the concluding remarks. The concluding remarks will contain what has been learned and my personal reflection on the topic as well as some thoughts about possible future areas for inquiries.

CHAPTER 2: Background and Contextual Framework of the Study

2.1   Overview of the Chapter

The chapter describes the contextual background of the study in an attempt to present a picture of political, economic, social and cultural issues from the traditional epoch to present circumstances in Liberia. Various topics are presented in order to throw light on issues which are connected to girls' present educational situations. To start with, the chapter presents a portrayal of Liberia up to the civil war and this includes: gender roles and education in traditional Liberia, arrival of the settlers, the military regime, the civil war and the education system as a contributing factor to the war and a challenge to reconstruction efforts. The ensuing subsections present contemporary Liberia, the political, social economic and cultural developments are provided, followed by the reconstruction of education in present Liberia and then a brief description of Zwedru, the site of this study.

2.2   Gender Roles and Education in Traditional Liberia

This section briefly describes Liberia in the traditional epoch. It emphasizes traditional gender roles since this is still influencing girls' present educational situations. In so doing, institutions and governance in the early Liberia are described with the intent to clarify how gender identity in

Liberia is shaped by the society. The history of present Liberia is more complex than the simple notion that it is a nation that was never colonized. What is today Liberia emerged from several events; first, the fall of the Sudan Empires spread people to all directions in Africa (TRC, 2009), second, the Portuguese's exploration of the West African region and their coming in contact with the vast land which includes present Liberia (Bortu, 2009) and third, the possession of Sierra Leone and Liberia for the purpose of creating a state of freed slaves, descendants of captured Africans (Dillon, 2008). Liberia became separated from Sierra Leone in 1903 when official border was drawn between Sierra Leone and the former according to an online source (History of Liberia: A Time Line, no date).

Institutions and *governance* in traditional Liberia played significant role in influencing *girls' a*nd *boys' personalities* in the country. Before the arrival of the Americo-Liberians around 1822, there were organized political systems among the indigenous population in the territory with functional socio-economic institutions (Sawyer, 1992, p. 69). There were two main broadly differing political systems in early Liberia. The people of the South and Southeast (Zwedru included) had one system. In this region female elders used a variety of strategies to secure a place within the official male power as they were a weak group. The Southerners' system was based on ancestry; leadership was passed down from one generation to the next within extended African families. Leadership was less complex, less hierarchal and individualistic since heads of sub-clans were equal across the board. Only the female secret society, *Sande*, existed in the Southeast of Liberia (Olokoju, 2006). In the Central, North and Northeast there was solid presence of hierarchy. The *Poro*, men's secret society and *Sande*, women's secret society represent dual-sex organizations in this region of Liberia, the two groups operated as separate societies. The style of leadership was based on a strong sense of community (Sawyer, 1992).

Traditional gender roles mainly left the female population in the traditional epoch out of political governance, it was a male hegemony. Even though there were some women who served in important leadership positions, they were very few (Olukoju, 2006). Indigenous construction of gender roles usually emphasized women in the role of bread winners, providers and care givers, largely involved in issues surrounding the family in all regions of Liberia. Women's participation in political governance was limited to private advice on political matters, to spouses and people who were closely related to them (TRC, 2008). Agriculture played a major role in

women's lives in addition to traditional, informal education and spirituality. Spirituality among the indigenous women in early Liberia was mostly centered on traditional beliefs. This has evolved to include other practices and will be elaborated later in the chapter in the presentation of religious communities in present Liberia. Traditional schooling for women was provided through *Sande-society*, (women's secret society) comprising of specialized training in herbalism and midwifery and more (Olokoju, 2006).

2.3   Arrival of the Settlers and the First Republic (1822 – 1980)

This section provides a synopsis of how African-Liberians were dominated by Americo-Liberians for more than a hundred years. This is important in order to contextualize the situation of indigenous girls today who are the focus of this study. The period 1822 to 1980 is referred to as the First Republic. The settlers in Liberia are freed slaves from the Southern States of the US who came during the 1800s. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was founded in 1817 in USA by abolitionists and slave owners along with others who were concerned about the plights of the black population in the United States. The black people of concern here included all people of African descent. The ACS planned and implemented the resettlement of freed slaves from the United States and the West Indies to the territory which is present Liberia. The decision to re-settle the black people outside of the U.S. was due mainly to the growing fear among the abolitionists and slave owners about the increase in the number of free blacks who would not easily assimilate into the dominant white society in the U.S. (Dillon, 2008). By 1821, the ACS had procured some territory which is now part of Liberia from local tribe leaders of the Bassa tribe (Bortu, 2009). Beginning in 1822, free-born black Americans, freed slaves of African descent and Africans freed from captured slave ships were settled by the ACS and subsequently other groups on lands which later became a part of Liberia (Mongrue, 2010).

 Emigration of the black people from the United States continued after Liberia was declared an independent nation in 1847. In 1850, the imposition of the Fugitive Slave Law in the United States encouraged the flow of freed blacks to the newly established Republic of Liberia. While some of the new arrivals were born free, some blacks only gained freedom under the conditions that they would return to Africa to the new colony; this was the case for manumitted slaves. Settlement to Liberia marked their changeover from property under the system of chattel slavery to people who could control their own lives (West, 2012). Americo-Liberians did not only set up

the Republic of Liberia with the hope of starting and safeguarding the rights that were denied to many of them in the United States, they also claimed the philanthropic purposes of suppressing Atlantic Slave Trade and disseminating Christianity (West, 2012).

Americo-Liberian's control and extension of Liberian territory and the domination of indigenous people who inhabited it was established by the brute force of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) which later became the Liberian National Guard (LNG) (TRC, 2008). According to Dillon, the Americo-Liberians installed power and dominated the African-Liberians by denying them access to education and the acquisition of the English language, they imposed laws to prohibit the indigenous people from acquiring education (Dillon, 2008). The indigenous people were sidelined from the leadership apparatus and denied political rights and full citizenship (Strategic Roadmap, 2013). The women and girls of Zwedru are indigenous Liberians.

From 1847 to 1980, Liberia was ruled by the "Americo-Liberians" and the overriding political party was the True-Whig Party (TWP) (Bortu, 2009). The TWP created links with indigenous elites in the interior and membership in this party was tantamount to national identity for most of the 20th century (TRC, 2009). Americo-Liberian elites used their education to *"other"* the African-Liberians, and to perpetuate class separation (Dillon, 2008). The identities of the diverse ethnic groups, the indigenous Liberians, were excluded from the identity of the society (Strategic Roadmap, 2013). This includes indigenous symbols, cultures and languages. For example, in the Flag of Liberia, the eleven stripes symbolize the eleven settlers who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1847, the blue field represents the African main land, the white star symbolizes the freedom that the ex-slaves were granted and the blue color signifies liberty, justice, and fidelity (Flags Encyclopedia; 2014). The True Whig Party (TWP) of Liberia was overthrown in a military coup on April 12th, 1980, leading to the assassination of the President and other high ranking officials of the government (TRC, 2009).

2.4 The Military Regime and the Second Republic (1980 - 1989)

The Military Regime ruled the country from 1980 to 1989. According to TRC (2009), many indigenous Liberians embraced the military coup; the underlying perception for supporting the coup was that, it served as recourse for the historical wrong. Moreover, it was an opportunity to establish a more inclusive and open structure of governance (Strategic Roadmap, 2013).

However, the military regime further fractured the Liberian society through ethnic politics and brutality. The conditions outlined above degenerated into a full-bloom civil war that began in 1989 (TRC, 2009).

2.5   The Civil War: 1989-2003

This sub-section elaborates on the civil war to highlight girls' and women's experiences during the war as well as the scars which are still challenging their education in present Liberia. The civil war which broke out on December 24, 1989 claimed between 200,000 – 300,000 lives and also forced more than 700,000 people into exile mostly in the Sub-region of West Africa and displaced about 1.4 million more internally. The war widely believed to have been rooted in historical grievances (Strategic Roadmap, 2013) was characterized by widespread war crimes-including torture, killings, beatings, rape and sexual assault among others (Weissman, 2004). There were many failed attempts by the international community to put an end to the chaos in Liberia and in the process various armed factions and groups emerged. However, a cease-fire agreement was reached in 1997 and Charles G. Taylor was elected President of the country. However, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) invasion of Liberia in 2000 resulted into four more years of civil war (Telle, 2007). As of June through August 2003, there were numerous assaults by armed factions on the capital, Monrovia, forcing thousands more civilians to escape their homes and left many in despairing need of sustenance.

Women and *children* formed a significant part of the population that fled the country during the war (Weissman, 2004). Those who remained in Liberia became displaced internally as the war intensified in various counties and communities (Paris, 2004). Women and girls were targets for all of the warring factions all of the time (TRC, 2008; 2009). Women became child soldiers, female commandoes, sex slaves and the like, and lost their self-worth at the hands of fighting forces. They suffered public humiliation and even demises. Women and girls bear both physical and psychological scars which must be repaired as part of the reconciliatory process (Strategic Roadmap, 2013; p. 25). On August 18, 2003, the warring factions signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), underlined by a cease of hostilities, and subsequently established a transitional government (TRC, 2008; 2009).

The next section presents scholarly arguments holding that the education system was a contributing factor to the war. This is presented as an allusion to the current reconstruction of education in contemporary Liberia.

2.6   Education as a Contributing Factor to the War and a Challenge for Reconstruction Efforts

After the arrival of the Americo-Liberians in the 1800s, many aspects of government and structures of Liberia were copied from the United States including the system of education. During the early 1860s, the settlers established an education system for their children and others who travelled from overseas (Dillon, 2008, p. 37). They included only their trusted indigenous elites and servants, but generally, education was not extended to the indigenous people as it was intended to secure the status quo (Bortu, 2009). In light of this, public primary and secondary schools were established in the country mainly in Monrovia and its surroundings. Higher institutions of learning were also established for and by the elites (TRC, 2008; 2009). Dillon asserts that "the freed slaves learned from their masters the key to domination, control and independent wealth – which was attained through education, as well as controlling who received it" (Dillon, 2008). The indigenous people were completely excluded from educational opportunities and did not learn the English language since they had no access to formal education. Around 1900s, Faith-based institutions established private primary and secondary schools. Again, Americo-Liberians were the main beneficiaries since they had knowledge of the English language. A limited number of indigenous Liberians were able to attend some of these schools through sponsorships (Bortu, 2009). However, the education system was reorganized in 1961 (TRC, 2009), giving some opportunity to indigenous Liberians to have access to formal schooling.

In terms of support to education, the government in the 1960s and 1970s imported textbooks from the US, but they contained materials on the American society which had little relevance for life in Liberia (Global Security, 2005). Also there were some progresses in education in Liberia in the 1970s and 1980s. During the late 1970s, indigenous Liberians who had earned higher education and were living abroad in Western countries were encouraged to contribute to the teaching staff of the University of Liberia (Adesiyan, 1988). During the 1980s, the "Improved Efficiency for Learning" (IEL) was established by the Ministry of Education's research

department to print Liberian primary education textbooks (Bortu, 2009). Nevertheless, the secondary school level remained critically underfunded throughout the period and even up to present (MOE, 2011a).

According to Bortu, education financing has been subtle in Liberia generally from the introduction of formal schooling by the Americo-Liberians in the 1820s to the outbreak of war in 1989. Public supports to education in Liberia have been fragmented and disorganized, and much to the disadvantage of the majority of the indigenous Liberian people. Ex-President Charles Taylor in 2002 allocated only 2.0 percent of the country's national budget to education, out of a national budget of half a billion dollars which was pledged by the international community at the International Reconstruction Conference on Education. Also, the interim government (NTGL) that succeeded ex-President Taylor allocated only 7 percent of half of a billion dollars of the national budget towards education in 2004 (Bortu, 2007). The Government of Liberia spending on education in 2008 was 2.8 % of GDP (CIA Fact Book, 2014). In fact, most of the amount spent on education has been towards payments of salaries to teachers and other personnel (MOE, 2011a).

The education system collapsed completely during the period of the war, experiencing human losses as well as infrastructure damages. After the war, thousands of unqualified persons volunteered to serve as teachers at the reopening of schools, most of these volunteers are still holding on to jobs as teachers (MOE, 2011a). Education to refugee Liberian children in the Sub-region of West Africa was provided by the UNHCR and various organizations and persons of good-will when the circumstances were afforded (Telle, 2007).

The previous sections have elaborated on Liberia from the traditional times up to the civil war. This has been necessary to present because of the many features in that period which influence girls' education in the present Liberia. Information about contemporary Liberia is provided below, beginning with an expansion on the cultures and customs of Liberia since this study is centered on girls' education which cannot be divorced from the wider community.

2.7 Contemporary Liberia: Social Structures and Economic Conditions

According to Parekh, culture is historically created, a system of meaning and worth, beliefs and practices which guide and regulate the understandings of individuals or group of people (Parekh,

2006). Liberian Pentecostal Churches play a significant role in the everyday activities of most Liberians. They claim a greater wholesome authority and spiritual power originating from the Holy Spirit (Maxwell, 2006, p. 12). Like other parts of Africa, spirituality continues to be an integral part of everyday life for most women (men too) in contemporary Liberia (Heaner, 2013). The sections that follow consist of: religious communities and education, civil society organizations, family relationships, socio-economic profile and unemployment among girls, the process and challenges of education reconstruction according to certain reports, structure of the education system and presentation of Zwedru, the site of this study.

2.7.1 Religious Communities and Education

Religion and world views in present Liberia are explored because many aspects of the lives of girls and women appear to be influenced and interpreted through their religion and world views as people are stocked in effects of the war and looking for closure (Strategic Roadmap, 2013). Two traditions, indigenous beliefs and Pentecostal Churches are the most widespread in Liberia and appear to be challenges to education in this context. Liberia is broadly divided into three religious groups, Christianity accounts for 40 percent, 40 percent of the people have Traditional Beliefs and Islam makes up for 20 percent. Under the Constitution of Liberia all religions are equal (TRC, 2009). According to Heaner, Pentecostal Churches have become widespread in Liberia since the late 1980s (Heaner, 2012) and are also well established in Zwedru, the site of the study.

As referred in the Strategic Roadmap, the presence of leaders of the war in high ranking positions with impunity is a challenge to Peace Building in Liberia. The violations during the civil war have contributed to deep and widespread psychological trauma across all communities in Liberia with most people stuck in the past and still desperate to find closure (Strategic Roadmap, 2013, p. 17). Heaner's study on Liberia reveals that most Liberians are "supportive of a blanket amnesty". On the one hand, Heaner looks at three public figures in Liberia; "each became famous through his high profile brutality during the war and still has prominent role in public life in Liberia", this includes members of the law-making body. On the other hand, "the Pentecostal Churches are situating themselves as the most serious and powerful interpreters of the realities of Liberian life". The Pentecostal Faith is well-known and extensively practiced in present Liberia, they seem to give religious clarifications for people's attitudes, good or bad

(Heaner, 2012). This means selectiveness in forgiving as well as what and who to condemn. Women and girls have a history of spirituality as earlier mentioned, and presently many women and girls spend considerable time going to church as compared to the period before the war. Girls' desire for closure (Strategic Roadmap, 2013) on various issues and the route that they take in different groups can have implications for their education.

Traditional beliefs in Liberia are many; this includes the Poro and Sande Traditional societies for men and women respectively in some regions of Liberia. In addition to these, there are other traditional beliefs which are less-known. As mentioned before, the women and girls of Zwedru are former refugees and IDPs, some of them originate from other regions of Liberia and this gives way to numerous cultural practices. The various organizations provide network, protect and promote the interests of their members. While memberships to these organizations are often open to all, some of them require money and other criteria that may be unaffordable to some people. Mongrue contends that organizations that are not within the means of all may promote division especially in the post-conflict situation of Liberia where the rule of law is weak. Mongrue asserts that in the pre-war period important decisions concerning the country were taken within private organizations, intentionally excluding the majority of the population while promoting class division (Mongrue, 2011). For instance, the group affiliation of important figures may be considered more valuable than others. Similarly, Johnson argues that the secret societies are deeply entrenched in local powers and challenge the process of change and transformation in post-war Liberia (Johnson, 2009). The underlying point is that religious communities are deeply rooted and form an integral part of everyday lives in Liberia. Some Liberians belong to either of the belief systems mentioned above and some belong to several of them simultaneously.

2.7.2 Civil Society Organizations in Liberia

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Liberia are presented because they are noteworthy actors in girls' education in present Liberia. CSOs are making effort to improve education in Liberia; this will be referred to in chapters 5 and 6. CSOs in Liberia are widespread but their capacities are low according to MOE (2011a). The National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCL) is a collaboration of various CSOs in Liberia. The membership of this organization is put around 1500 local organizations including women's organizations in Zwedru. The CSOs are engaged in

consultative discussions with the government, the international community as well as the general civil society. The activities of these organizations include policy development issues, institutional governance as well as capacity building of CSOs (NCSCL, 2014). The CSOs are actively involved in youth education initiatives in the Southeast and are getting help from international NGOs in Zwedru. NGOs and their activities will be presented later in chapters 5 and 6.

2.7.3 Traditional Gender Roles and Family Relationships

Family relationships and gender roles and their links to education are presented because they are intertwined in Liberian society. The concept of family in Liberia is the same as in most West African countries where cultural and financial responsibilities for girls have implications for their education. Traditional families in Liberia are extended, meaning that uncles, aunties, cousins, nieces, nephews, grandparents and a host of other family members can be part of a household (Olukoju, 2006). Marriage and other non-legal relationships are viewed as a practical, social and economic arrangement between families. Monogamy and polygamy are both widely practiced in Liberia (Culture Orientations Resource Center USA, 2010). Liberian marriage laws do not license a parallel marriage by any party to a statutory marriage. However, in practice there are gaps in the observance of this law, mainly by powerful individuals such as political leaders and other members of the ruling class. Likewise, privileged members of Liberian society as well as other less privileged men keep up a façade of monogamy while practicing polygamy. This involves indigenous Liberians as well as Americo-Liberians (Olukoju, 2006, p. 98). In 1995, the association of female lawyers in Liberia (AFELL) was successful in getting the legislature to pass an act giving equal status to customary and statutory marriages (Cornell University Law Library, 2014). SIGI records that 16 % of women aged 15 to 49 are in polygamous relationships in Liberia and rates of polygamy are higher for women over 35 years than for younger women which suggests that the practice is declining. Also, the legal age for marriage is 18 years for women and 21 years for men. But in real life 20.2 % of girls between 15 and 19 years of age are married, divorced or widowed. Section 2.9 of the Equal Rights of the Traditional Marriage Law of 1998 permits a girl to marry at age 16, but underage marriage continues to be practiced especially in rural areas (SIGI, 2011).

A feature of the patriarchy system which is prevalent in Liberian communities is the dominance of men over women (Olukoju, 2006). The position of women in Liberia varies based on region, ethnic group and religion. Customary laws are a major contributing factor to inequality. Women who are married under customary laws have few rights in regard to parental authority and inheritance, and they have restricted capacity to contribute to decision-making within the household. This shapes women's prospects to take an active political and social role outside the home, as doing so often prompts opposition and criticism (SIGI, 2011). However, among some Liberians and especially the educated people, both husband and wife can work outside the home and participate in household chores.

High respect for elders is an important component of Liberian culture (Culture Orientations Resource Center USA, 2010). Prior to the war, boys and girls were mentored and sustained by the older generation. In turn, the younger generation would care for the elderly people as a social norm. But the cultural ethics and traditions that supported a harmonious society for hundreds of years have been tragically disrupted by the civil war (Buseh, 2008; p. 26). This means that social and economic structures are destroyed and this can have implications for education, especially for girls since such breakdown may contribute to s problems which may cause girls' distractions.

2.7.4 Socio-economic Profile and Unemployment among Females

This sub-section looks at Liberia's natural resources and industry as well as the socio-economic conditions and unemployment in the country in an attempt to explore the correlations between the latter and education. The section begins with a brief description of natural resources and industry and this is followed by a depiction of unemployment.

Generally the industrial sector of Liberia is dominated by foreign-owned companies, mainly timber, rubber and oil palm processing. The Southeast of Liberia where Zwedru, the site of this research is located, is mainly a forest region which hosts many timber and gold mining companies. NCSCL records that the Liberian-Malaysian Timber Company gained a forestry concession of 42 % of Liberia's productive forest area in 1999 to 2000 in Grand Gedeh and neighboring counties (NCSCL, 2014). According to Olukoju, on the one hand the Liberian economy is centered on a modern, export-oriented sector, which produces plantation crops and timber and delivers revenue for its leaders to enjoy relatively high standards of living. On the

other hand, a traditional low-productivity, subsistence agricultural sector, in which poverty is pervasive, employs a high portion of the population (Olukoju, 2006). Liberia is the sixth largest rubber producer in the world and the largest in Africa. The Firestone Rubber Plantations Company of Liberia is the world's largest single rubber operation (CNN African Voices, 2014). Other resources include gold, coffee, cocoa, cassava, oil palm, sugarcane, bananas as well as life stock (Olokoju, 2006). Allafrica.com indicates that many international petroleum companies including Chevron, African Petroleum, Anadarko and Exxon Mobil have begun drilling for oil in Liberia, but there is no further official information regarding this. Prior to the war, LAMCO (Liberia, America and Swedish-Mineral Company) a major mining firm, operated in the town of Yekepa in Nimba County which is close neighbor to Grand Gedeh County (Zwedru included). The premises of former LAMCO are currently occupied by another mining company, ArcelorMittal, the world's leading steel and mining company (LEITI, 2014).

Today, Liberia is overwhelmed by unemployment which can be attributed to a combination of factors including lack of education. TRC (2008, 2009) put emphasis on bad governance and corruption as key glitches in Liberian society both before the war and in the period after. Women and girls are two times more affected than their male counterparts as illustrated below. Unemployment has many accompanying problems including crime and erosion in social behavior. Dupuy states that the incapability of most people to access educational opportunities may produce large numbers of isolated, sidelined, and therefore angry, disenchanted youth who without any education, skills, or work opportunities could become ready recruits and easy prey for rebel leaders (Dupuy, 2006). This was the case in Liberia where faction leaders tapped into the dissatisfaction of youths because of their lack of education and job opportunities. The young generation was displeased with society, were hardly literate and provided a fruitful recruiting milieu for rebel movements around 1989 when the war began (Duyvesteyn, 2004, p. 58).

Below are two broad statistical overviews of the unemployment situation in Liberia where girls are two or more times affected as compared to their male counterparts. Two surveys are presented, that of the Government of Liberia (LIGIS), and that of an NGO. This section looks at unemployment among women and girls in contemporary Liberia as this seems to show a relationship to lack of education.

2.7.4.1 LIGIS Labor Survey

The Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) in 2010 conducted this Liberia labor force survey; an extract from the survey provides information on unemployment in the tables below. The LISGIS uses the term "relaxed definition of unemployment" for determining the unemployment rate. According to this definition, a person is considered as currently employed if s/he has done any work at all, paid or unpaid, during a short reference period, in this case last week. A person doing as little as one hour's work therefore counts as being employed. Work here include, but is not limited to, working for themselves or unpaid work for their own household. According to the statistics of LISGIS, the demography of unemployment is the following:

	Eligible population	Labor force	Inactive population	Employed population	Unemployed persons
Liberia	**1,804,000**	**1,133,000**	**671,000**	**1,091,000**	**42,000**
Urban areas	932,000	512,000	420,000	484,000	28,000
Rural areas	873,000	621,000	251,000	607,000	14,000
Male	849,000	561,000	288,000	542,000	19,000
Female	956,000	573,000	383,000	549,000	23,000
Greater Monrovia	569,000	301,000	269,000	281,000	20,000

The 42,000 unemployed persons are further divided into the following subgroups:

Age group	Urban			Rural			Total Liberians		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15-24	3,000	6,000	9,000	1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	8,000	12,000
25-34	4,000	5,000	9,000	3,000	2,000	5,000	7,000	7,000	14,000
35-54	4,000	4,000	9,000	3,000	3,000	5,000	7,000	7,000	14,000
55-64	*	*	1,000	*	*	1,000	1,000	*	1,000
65+	*	*	*	1,000	*	1,000	1,000	*	1,000
Total	**12,000**	**16000**	**28,000**	**7,000**	**7,000**	**14,000**	**19,000**	**23,000**	**42,000**

There are some small discrepancies in the above statistics concerning the numbers as the additions in the various categories do not always correspond to the total. Since this is information from the published report I have presented the statistics as given.

2.7.4.2 NGO Survey of Unemployment in Liberia

According to the Women's Refugee Commission's survey on education and skills building needs for youth in Liberia, youth unemployment rate is in reality as high as 88 percent and young people simply have little access to wage jobs. About 63.8 % of Liberians live below the poverty line with life expectancy at 45 years, and 56% of females and 39% of males have never attended school. This calculation is based on a multi-year research and advocacy project, focused on strengthening educational and job training programs for displaced, conflict affected young people in Liberia (Women's Refugee Commission, 2009). The Women's Commission did not give a definition for unemployment.

2.7.5 The Process and Challenges of Education Reconstruction in Liberia based on International and National Reports

This sub-section presents a brief overview of education reconstruction in Liberia based on certain reports as this seems to show relationship to current issues in the reconstruction process. The information below is generated from various sources including assessment report from the IMF. The main subjects explored are education funding and the rule of law, both relate especially to girls' education. The situation of education funding in Liberia is quite challenging to pin down due to the complexity in defining when the emergency period ended and when the

development era began. This means that Liberia's transition process from receiver of relief assistances to development assistances is unclear. According to scholarly research on education funding in Sub-Saharan Africa, education funding in the region remains an area that is overlooked and under-researched (see Education sector analysis). Relatedly Buckland notes that aid to education in fragile states remains a complex phenomenon, stating that

> passable financing for the changeover from humanitarian aid to reconstruction and development also is lacking, leading to setbacks in the early gains to education brought about during the early recovery stage in countries like Liberia (Buckland, 2005; UNESCO, 2011 cited in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p. 9).

This infers a complex situation in terms of education funding in Liberia since the nation is a fragile low-income state. According to Turrent, the World Bank's country policy and institutional assessment (CPIA) describes a country as fragile state if

> it is a low-income country and has either an in line CPIA score of less than 3.2 on average taken from CPIA scores of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank or the existence of a united Nations and or regional peace-keeping or peace-building mission in the past 3 years (Turrent, 2011; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p. 170).

There is a peace-building mission in Liberia since 2003 which was established at the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

"Lift Liberia", the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) for Liberia was prepared by the Government of Liberia in broad consultation with stakeholders and development partners including staffs of the World Bank and IMF. The PRS was adopted after the war to help to put the war devastated country on course. The document separates areas that need attention in the country into 4 pillars; 1) peace and security, 2) economic revitalization, 3) governance and rule of law and 4) infrastructure and basic services (IBS). The IBS, the 4th pillar consist of the government's provision of physical infrastructure and social services, including *education*. A 5th pillar which covers cross-cutting issues was also set up. The progress of *Lift Liberia* for the period of June 2008 to December 2011 was assessed by IMF. According to the IMF, outcome in some areas of the *Lift Liberia* plan was only marginally positive, this includes the transition to Liberian agencies the handling of security, basic education, roads, environment and labor protection. The IMF report notes that there is need to rethink new strategies for the next

development plan. Furthermore, the IMF report underscores that the PRS was not only a plan for government action but also a framework for organizing donor assistance for Liberia (IMF Report, 2012, p. 8).

The underlying point is that Liberia's education sector and its reconstruction process is heavily reliant on donor assistances. The IMF report seems to suggest that the Government of Liberia did not satisfactorily complete its responsibilities and this may dissuade donor institutions. According to the IMF Report (2012), 34 themes were given weight in the education sector and noted in the PRS, many were concentrated on improving the quantity and quality of inputs of teachers, curriculum reform as well as physical infrastructure. Out of the 34 themes, two thirds of the tasks were completed by the Government of Liberia and notable ones include the following:

- o Review and revision of the salaries of teachers and introduction of salary scales based on qualification, experience, performance, position / responsibility, teaching subject and place of teaching
- o The payroll verification process was completed in all the fifteen counties as well as an in-house count of employees of the Ministry of Education against a special standard to control fraud
- o Seven deliverables concerning construction, rehabilitation, and furnishing of schools were all completed. The one major deliverable for teacher training was also completed.
- o The new secondary school curriculum was aligned with the West African Examination Council (WAEC). This means that the new curriculum consists of new subjects and improvement in other subjects which will allow for better preparation of students (IMF Report, 2012).

A report from the Ministry of Education analyzing educational reconstruction in contemporary Liberia is explicitly worried about the secondary level and states that

"The laudatory efforts of education in Liberia have led to sharp increase in students attending school, the construction of new schools at the primary school level, and efforts to begin to restructure tertiary education. But one area that remains largely untouched is the secondary education level" (MOE, 2011a, p. 115).

While the MOE document applauds efforts at educational reforms in Liberia, it clearly states that the secondary level remains largely untouched. The secondary school level was chronically

underfunded since the first Republic of Liberia in the 1800s to the start of the civil war in 1989. This will be further detailed in chapters 5 and 6.

Pillar 3 of the *Lift Liberia* strategy, "Governance and Rule of Law", might have especially implications for girl's education. The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, NUPI, states that

> The international response to the situation of women in Liberia – although touted as one of the greatest success stories in implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 by the UN and the Liberian Government – has not achieved what it set out to do. Efforts at reforming the institutions of the rule of law have shown mixed record, to say the least (NUPI Working Paper 778, 2010, p. 19).

The NUPI report underscores the need to reinforce the rule of law in Liberia as part of efforts to end sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) which has great consequences for girls' education. In relation to *rule of law* in post-conflict contexts, Paris (2004) affirms that rule of law needs to be sufficiently strengthened before liberalization of institutions. Paris makes specific reference to Liberia in his advocacy for "*Institutionalization Before Liberalization*". Paris' description of *liberalization* as it relates to the Liberian case includes building of police stations with special units for SGBV, court houses as well as relying on only statutory laws. According to NUPI, Liberia operates a dual system, customary and traditional practices alongside statutory laws. This creates a complex situation for achieving justice in Liberia. This problem requires a holistic approach to achieve a working judicial system. The NUPI puts it that "as long as no-one in Liberia gets justice, women and children will not get it either – no matter how many police stations and court houses are built" (NUPI, 2010, p.19). This infers that proper functioning of the legal system of Liberia plays a key role in creating a suitable atmosphere for girls' education. This will be further elaborated in chapter 6.

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) records that Liberia receives most of its education expenditure from donors. The education sector of Liberia receives substantial support from multilateral organizations, bilateral agencies, a host of international NGOs, international religious institutions as well as individual foundations. The assistances to the education sector ranges from grants to contributions in the form of food for the national school feeding program through the UN World Food Program. Some of this funding is channeled through the Government of Liberia and the

UN and some go directly to educational institutions and individuals (ESP, 2010, p. 30). Prominent providers of assistance to the Education Sector include UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, European Union (EU), Open Society Institute (OSI), WFP, UNHCR, USAID, Save the Children UK, Plan –Liberia, International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNFPA and other international institutions and NGOs who work as implementing partners. Additionally Denmark, China, Egypt, Russia and Morocco are making bilateral contributions in form of scholarships. The MOE is increasingly moving partners from focusing just on their own interests to supporting the plans and priorities of the government (ESP, 2010, p. 30). Various supporters provide different angles of educational development initiatives in Liberia. Organizations doing education related work in Zwedru include the Danish organization Uddannelse Skaber Udvikling (IBIS), which is the main education implementing partner in the Southeastern region, German Agro Action (GAA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Medica Mondiale. This will be further elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

2.7.6 Structure of the Education System in Liberia: the 9-3-4 System

Liberia operates the 9-3-4 system of education, nine years of basic education which is comprised of primary and junior secondary school, preceded by two years of optional early childhood education which is mainly provided by private institutions. According to MOE primary education has received the highest priority in education in post-war Liberia and complementary results have been achieved. Junior secondary school is experiencing a decline in enrollment for both boys and girls. Junior secondary school is followed by three years of senior secondary education which can include technical and vocational education and then four years of university or other tertiary undergraduate education. Education in Liberia is compulsory at the primary and junior secondary levels (grades $1 - 9$) from the age of 6 to 16 years of age but there is negligence of enforcement of attendance (MOE, 2011a). Senior secondary education level which is the concentration of this study is presented below.

2.7.7 Senior Secondary Education

The two kinds of senior secondary schools in Liberia are: 1) those that operate a comprehensive curriculum in preparation for university studies and other higher education, and 2) specialist secondary schools which cater for pupils whose interests and aptitudes are for specialized subject

areas including technical and vocational training. UNESCO defines technical and vocational education as an

> all-inclusive term referring to those parts of the educational process concerning in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the attainment of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to employment in various sectors of economic and social life (UNESCO 2005, cited in MOE, 2011a).

One of the four schools in this study is a governmental technical and vocational training institution which is owned and operated by the Government of Liberia even prior to the war. The other three are private schools with a comprehensive curriculum and do not offer technical and vocational training. The actual schools in this study will be presented in chapter 4. Senior secondary schools may be established, owned and operated by the Government, private individuals and organizations. The Government owned schools are tuition-free while the others necessitate tuition fees. Governmental schools are supervised directly from the office of the Assistant Minister for Secondary Education initially. This supervision may be transferred to the county or district level, if formal decentralized school systems are developed in those areas, as it should be according to the policy (MOE, 2011a). The daily operations of the school is entrusted to a principal, assisted by vice principals and heads of departments and other non-teaching staffs. The private schools are not under the direct supervision of the MOE, but follow the same curriculum as the public schools, and are governed by the rules and regulations of the MOE. The government schools are fully financed and operated by the government. The private schools are owned and operated by private entities but are subsidized by the government (MOE, 2011c).

2.7.8 Zwedru

My study is conducted in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County. The presentation below is intended to give a fuller picture of the contextual background of this study and it includes information on the population, economic and social conditions as well as the security atmosphere since these could be vital for girls' participation in secondary education. Many earlier studies on education in Liberia after the CPA of 2003 have not covered the Zwedru area due to its limited accessibility. Zwedru is located in the Southeastern region of Liberia, has a population of about 29,000 indigenous Liberians, and was enacted into law as a Municipal City in 1972. Zwedru today is inhabited by former refugees and IDPs of Liberian indigenous origin, refugees from La Cote

d'Ivoire and other countries, business people from different ethnic and regional origins, staff and personnel of international NGOs among others (UNMIL, 2004). The population of Grand Gedeh County is 132, 638 people (FrontpageAfrica.Com, 2014). There is a significant presence of UN peace keeping force in Zwedru as the area lies close to the border with La Cote d'Ivoire (UNMIL, 2004). Parts of the border line between La Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia have remained unstable and there is a joint security operation from the two countries to avoid further instabilities. Seven UN troops, along with several civilians, were killed in an ambush in western Cote d'Ivoire, towards the Liberian border in June (Selmah, 2013). The presidents of Liberia and La Cote d'Ivoire met in Zwedru in September of 2013 to find solutions to the tense atmosphere along the border-line between the two countries (FrontPage Africa, 2014).

Economic activities in the Zwedru area include timber and local gold mining. The main occupational activity of inhabitants of Zwedru is subsistence farming, and there are a few people employed in government, NGOs and private institutions. There are also a few local enterprises which employ a small number of people. According to Oxfam GB, Grand Gedeh is one of the counties that is most affected by food insecurity, with 42 % of the population being food insecure. This county sees very high stunting rate, 43.5 % of the population. Competition between the host community (former Liberian refugees and IDPs) and refugees from La Cote d'Ivoire and other countries living in the area for casual labor has diminished prospects for work and constrain households from earning income. For instance, casual labor jobs offered by NGOs are often distributed between host community and refugees and are limited. As a result family circles are getting vulnerable with limited coping strategies (Oxfam GB, 2011). Zwedru and surrounding areas have hosted thousands of refugees from La Cote d'Ivoire since the inception of crisis in that country in 2002. The UNHCR puts the number of refugees in the Zwedru area at 40,000 to 50,000 now; they were more than 100,000 before (UNHCR, 2014). These are outside the population that requires formal education in Zwedru, but they are mentioned here because of the economic and security situation of the area and its possible implications for girls' education.

The presence of Liberian returnees who originate from various regions of Liberia has increased several traditional practices including the *Sande* secret society and other traditional religious beliefs. Also, the breakdown of family structures in Liberia contributes to large households in Zwedru, accentuating traditional gender roles. Moreover, Pentecostal Churches are widespread

in Zwedru like other regions of Liberia. These conditions are presented because of their influences particularly on girls' education.

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The theories and concepts presented in this chapter serve as a platform for the analysis and discussions of the data in chapter 6, the intention being to answer the research questions while addressing the objective of the study. The overall objective of this study is to explore the process of education reconstruction in the post-conflict context of Liberia with emphasis on the reintegration of returnee girls in secondary school. The main theories employed in the study are socialization theories, gender theories and capability theories. Additionally, specific concepts are drawn upon to highlight certain core issues in the study. This theoretical and conceptual framework is chosen based on the findings of the study which is presented in chapter 5. The framework or analytical tool will be applied to the discussions in chapter 6 with the intent to analyze and understand the different challenges that girls in Zwedru are facing through their educational reintegration processes in secondary schools. Specific challenges faced by the Ministry of Education are taken into consideration as the Ministry is juxtaposed the reconstruction of education as well as girls' overall development. Liberia is a post-conflict fragile state which heavily relies on the international community for assistance in the process of the reconstruction of its education sector. Hence, the activities of NGOs in Zwedru form part of the background for the choices in this theoretical and conceptual framework.

The main scholars whose ideas form the basis of the theoretical framework include the following: Sen, A. is well known for his contributions to the field of welfare economics and development economics. The capability approach was first enunciated by Sen in the 1980s and the concept continues to be closely linked to him (Sen, 1999). Berger and Luckmann are scholars in the field of sociology of knowledge. They are recognized for their influence on the concept of social construction of reality. They present knowledge as more than ideology and also includes false consciousness, propaganda, science and art (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Paulo Freire is famous for his involvement in education movements to eradicate massive illiteracy among marginalized groups. He has made many recommendations on education reforms to promote

inclusion. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emphasizes education, empowerment and transformation as core concepts (Freire, 1970). Aikman and Unterhalter's book *Beyond Access* is a dream of remodeling education to promote social change and enable girls to reach their full potentials and contribute to a just society. They examine issues of gender based inequalities in education and analyze government policies and their implications for women's empowerment. Key words that are associated with the scholars include girls' education, gender mainstreaming and the MDGs (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). The voices of scholars in the field of education in zones of conflict and post-conflict situations also form an integral part of the theoretical framework. These scholars emphasize that *quality* education can improve state fragility and contribute to sustainable peace (Mundy and Peterson, 2011).

Theories and concepts elaborated herein are selected to serve various purposes in relation to the overall objective. Berger and Luckmann (1966) socialization theories emphasize primary and secondary socialization and will be applied to explore and comprehend various issues surrounding secondary school girls' overall circumstances and the connections to education. The role of home and school, the construction of gender as well as gender roles according to socialization theories are provided. Gender theories according to various scholars will be applied to explore and understand the situation of girls and education. For instance gender equality and equity according to Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) will serve as lens for the exploration of girls' education in Zwedru. Relatedly, Sen's capability approach will be used to underpin various issues relating to gender equality, equity and education (Sen, 1999). The concept of culture will be employed to explore and comprehend cultural issues regarding girls' education as well as other factors surrounding the education reconstruction process. King's framework which describes different possible relationships between education and conflict (King, 2011, in Mundy and Peterson, 2011) will be used to explore and understand the role that education can play in the lives of women and girls in a fragile context.

3.2 Socialization Theories in Relation to the Construction of Gender

From childhood throughout their lives, individuals learn from various experiences. Berger and Luckmann note that primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes; secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society. Primary socialization is the most important

because it is predominantly mediated through one's significant others, parents and care givers, from an early stage in life. Secondary socialization is the internalization of institution-based sub-worlds. That is, in secondary socialization biological or close knit relations become less important to the learning arrangements (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For instance acquiring skills in computer knowledge at school is an example of secondary socialization; it takes place later in the life of an individual and often away from parents and care givers. This notion of primary and secondary socializations infers that home, school and other social arenas that a person experiences on a frequent basis have influence on a person's development, attitudes and behaviors. Taylor (1994, p. 25) records that our identity is somewhat formed by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others. This means that identity construction is influenced by a person's entourage which is similar to the notion of socialization. According to Breidlid and Breidlid, the notion of gender and gender roles are social constructions that are derived in different societal settings and may be reproduced in various contexts including schools (Breidlid and Breidlid, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al, 2013) This means that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. The progression from childhood to adulthood draws a parallel to social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The notion of social constructionism provides a set of conceptual tools that help to understand the sources of gender-related standards and practices (Breidlid and Breidlid, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al. 2013). Gender refers to the socially acquired notions of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified (Momsen, 2004, p. 2). Kevane notes that gender refers to gathering of rules and identities that advocate and disallow behavior for persons, in their social roles as men and women. These rules and identities may be measured, or inadvertent, obvious or implied, cognizant or unconscious (Kevane, 2004). This means that all activities within cultures relate to positions on different issues and these have influence on the construction of a person's identity. The statements by Taylor, Momsen and Kevane are interrelated in that they all imply that socialization processes (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) are central to identity construction and gender construction. This is confirmed by Kevane's (2004) statement that all societies of the world are gendered.

The social production of gender is inseparable from that of race, sexuality, class, nationality, ability and other categories of difference (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Hence, gender may

be understood and interpreted in various ways in different cultures. This is in line with Odora Hopper's statement; talking about gender entails trying to recognize how society made you what you turn out to be, how it shaped your behavior, your ambitions, and your attitude towards yourself as well as towards society at large (Hoppers, 2002; in Holmarsdottir et al. 2013). This coincides with Berger and Luckman notion of social constructionism which underlines that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 13). Kevane states that in African cultures, elderliness and wisdom are often placed side by side, and given considerable importance, their know-how derived from experience makes them repositories of structure (Kevane, 2004, p. 30). This means that traditions and cultures in Africa are handed down orally across generations and such practices are deeply rooted and nurtured by the elders who are often resistant to changes. Berger and Luckman's (1966) concepts of primary and secondary socialization can be linked to Kevane's statement about elders and traditions in Africa. Kevane underscores that traditional African societies are led by elders (Kevane, 2004). Similarly, Breidlid and Breidlid record that men and women become accustomed to gendered lives and establish gendered identities because they make different choices depending on the opportunities that they are offered. In traditional societies in Africa these opportunities or lack of opportunities are shaped by place and the structures of place which are transmitted across generations. For instance deeply rooted patriarchal, male-controlled structures which are prevalent in traditional African societies permeate governance structures, policies and behaviors (Breidlid and Breidlid, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Societies groom boys and girls into various directions through different opportunities and prospects that are accessible. For instance in traditional African settings, fetching water, taking care of siblings and the like are activities that girls experience as they grow up whereas boys' training often takes roots in heroism, hunting and so on. Gender roles therefore show a discrepancy from one society to another even though all societies of the world are gendered (Kevane, 2004). According to Aikman and Unterhalter, girls and women are deprived of a wide range of opportunities in traditional African settings due to patriarchal structures (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006).

The next sub-section looks at some gender and education analysis tools which are applied by policy makers globally, including Liberia. The focus of this study is on girls' reintegration into

secondary schools and the goal of achieving Education for All as well as the ideas of gender parity and equality form a central part of the contextual background of this study.

3.3   Gender and Education: Parity, Equality and Equity

Gender parity can be clarified as the same proportion of boys and girls enter and complete school. The outcomes of girls' participation in education in most of Sub-Saharan Africa have not been very encouraging and this has been attributed to culture and conflicts (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Leach (2003) notes that issues relating to education and gender are complex and need to be fully captured, understood and interpreted in order to be addressed in policies and practices globally. Therefore various analytical tools are employed by policy makers to explicate such complex phenomena. Several key concepts in gender and education for exploring gender issues globally include parity, sex and gender, sex stereotyping, gender relations, gender roles, productive and reproductive work, triple role, gender needs, gender equality versus equity, and empowerment (Leach, 2003). These tools are applied to enlighten girls' roles and experiences in relation to education. Holmarsdottir records that it is unanimously agreed by education providers and enablers at both international and national levels that gender is of vital importance to education processes and the achievement of the goal of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MGGs). However, most appraisals of the outcome of educational interventions in the developing world put the number of boys and girls in school, gender parity high on the agenda while giving less credence to the processes of education (Holmarsdottir, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). The underlying point is that gender roles and expectations in traditional African societies deprive girls of various opportunities, hence, inquiries into issues surrounding gender and education needs to take this into consideration. According to Kirk, girls in conflict affected zones have different needs and indeed their conditions differ from girls in other areas where there are no armed conflicts (Kirk, 2007; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). For instance, all of the warring factions in the Liberian conflict targeted women and girls for various reasons and raped and abused them (see chapter 2). Many of such victims are participants in education in post-war Liberia. Also, in events of poor hygienic conditions which are prevalent in post-conflict contexts, girls are more exposed to diseases (Kirk, 2007; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). Holmarsdottir underlines that both quantitative and qualitative approaches are needed in analysis of issues in gender and education in order to grasp

statistical understanding as well as to gain rich empirical examples to inform policy decisions and practices (Holmarsdottir, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Gender parity in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is quite alarming, 54 % of all girls do not complete primary education and only 17 % pursue secondary education (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006).

The notions of *gender equality* and *equity* are significant tools which are frequently employed to consolidate and enrich policies and practices in the field of education. These concepts will be employed later in the analysis and discussion of the findings of this study in chapter 6. The concepts are central for the capability approach which is one of the pillars of this study. Gender equality underscores respect for human rights and a set of ethical demands for safeguarding the circumstances for all people, men and women, to live a full life. Gender equality is concerned with creating environments that will enhance the well-being of marginalized groups (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006, p.3). In relation to education, gender equality entails the fair provision of educational opportunities for boys and girls since the right to education is a civil and political right (UNESCO, 2000). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are especially aimed at reducing gender gap to achieve gender equality in education. The goal of gender equality is essential for the achievement of all of the MDGs and it is grounded in principles of social justice, rights and non-discrimination (Holmarsdottir, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Gender gap in SSA is attributed to a web of complex and interwoven factors including cultural practices, conflicts and poverty (Momsen, 2004). The concept of gender equality is very essential to gender analysis in post conflict and fragile contexts because often the rule of law and other aspects of society are still in the process of reparation (Kirk, 2007; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). Kabeer (2003) is fearful about structural factors and their effects on gender and education including poor households where girls' education is not a priority. In traditional African settings, girls' education is often deemed as loss to the family because she is considered as a visitor in the family who will eventually get married into another family.

The notion of *gender equality in education* is associated with practical gender needs that require specific attention in education, for instance social relations which have implications for girls' access to education (Holmarsdotir, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Gender equality in education and equity are closely related; both underline justice and the relevant conditions to

ameliorate impartiality (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). The concept of gender equity can be defined as

> "the meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of conditions under which women make choices" (Subrahmanian, 2005; cited in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013, p. 15).

The definition of equity underscores justice and underlines the need for rearrangements of resources and opportunities whereby every individual benefits at an equal level. The means or opportunities highlighted in the above definition include various ways of accomplishing a fulfilling life (Holmarsdottir, 2013, in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Education and the process of distribution form an integral part of the "resources and opportunities" alluded to in the definition of equity. This description of equity concurs with Sen's Capability theory (Sen, 1999). Before elaborating on the capability approach, a synopsis of some of the mainstream approaches to gender in education is provided as they are among the tools of analysis generally applied by the World Bank, IMF and other institutions that influence education globally.

These mainstream approaches are presented below because they are major sources of influence in the process of educational reconstruction in Liberia and specifically in Zwedru, the site of the study.

3.4 Mainstream Approaches to Gender in Education

I present here briefly some of the mainstream approaches to gender and education as methods that are used by education enablers and providers in the context of this study. For instance, the mainstream approaches have influenced education and curriculum in Liberia and they are mostly used by NGOs and the MOE. In analyzing gender in education, Aikman and Unterhalter identify four frameworks which can be applied to clarify policies and practices in education. The frameworks are Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD), Post-structuralism and the Capability approach (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). The WID framework emphasizes the expansion of girls' education, relating it to economic growth, "*if you educate a woman, you educate the nation*"; GAD is grounded in a sociological line of attack on gender inequality while the post-structuralism approach draws on literary theory and cultural studies. These three frameworks are by and large based on human rights, gender equality and education, and especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the international

Convention on the rights of the Child. These frameworks are also based on the Jomtiem 1990 Conference and the adoption of the EFA and the Beijing Declaration of 1995 with its emphasis on women's empowerment. WID and GAD employ rights-based international conventions but skeptics have apprehensions about whether they may be generalizable in all contexts. These anxieties are rooted in how the intended purposes and the actual practices may be harmonized in situations of cultural differences. Nonetheless, none of the three frameworks WID, GAD and post-structuralism do address the philosophical questions about the nature of rights, needs and capabilities and their inferences for thinking about gender and education. On the other hand, these enquiries are given credence by the capability approach which is championed by Amartya Sen (Sen, 1999). Given the challenges that girls and women are confronted with in the post-conflict context of Zwedru, Liberia, I have chosen to let the capability approach serve as a major lens for discussions on gender and education in this study.

3.5   The Capability Approach

The capability approach is right-based as the other frameworks, WID, GAD and post-structuralism. But, according to Sen, in a more concrete mode than the others, the capability approach underscores rights to education and the necessity of the political will that supports gender equality (Sen, 1999). In this framework, planning and delivering education requires an understanding of human *capabilities*, this means people's freedom to achieve what they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). The emphasis is therefore on the individual autonomy and agency (Holmarsdottir, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). In examining women and *agency*, the condition for acting or instrumentality of women, Sen states that

> (…) the objective has progressively grown and expanded from this welfare oriented focus to integrate – and underline – the vigorous role of women's agency. Not anymore the flaccid receivers of welfare boost, women are more and more seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change; the forceful advocates of social transformations that can alter the lives of *both* women and men (Sen, 1999, p. 189).

Women are more than ever before advocating for transformations - political, social, structural, and educational transformations that will be beneficial to all humans regardless of gender. A person's capability refers to the different arrangements of operational activities that are practical

and realistic for her to achieve. *Capability* is therefore a kind of *freedom*: the fundamental freedom to reach various functioning combinations, or the freedom to achieve various life styles (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). The capability approach is centered on safeguarding circumstances for social justice and fairness. In the context of education this means providing educational opportunities and redistributing resources in a way that every individual, boy or girl, will receive equal benefits from it. When these challenges are acknowledged, they can be addressed to promote a move beyond the disjointed achievements of the past in pursuing the goal of Education for All (Holmarsdottir, 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). In the ensuing discussions on gender in education, this approach can serve as a tool to examine girls' situations as it allows for one to comprehend the various challenges that girls are exposed to.

The capability approach is concerned about *domestic imbalances* and *discriminations within the labor market* and the *government.* A sustainable labor market promotes development, and the objective of development is *freedom* to achieve what one values; hence, emphasis should be placed on that objective and not on specific instruments for achieving this goal. Development should be seen as an expansion of *freedoms.* This means that things that make development practical or concrete ought to be prioritized (Sen, 1999, p. 3). For instance, girls who are vulnerable learners in a post-conflict setting like Zwedru (MOE, 2006b) need education and skills training that will make real impact on their lives in terms of the labor market. This seems more realistic than offering only a comprehensive curriculum which is geared towards higher education, the process is long and most girls are already in need of sustenance. The capability approach proposes a strategy based on *ethical notions* of valuing freedom and affirming rights as *ethical obligations* of each person to another. Supporters of the capability approach regard the significance of *education as a strategic capability*, a kind of freedom which allows one to accomplish different aims and objectives. In the discussion of the findings in chapter 6, the capability approach will be applied to filter girls' and women's capabilities in relation to the education that they are being offered.

Breidlid aand Breidlid assert that it may be quite misleading to conclude the needs of an individual based on assessments driven by, for example, the number of years spent in school indicated by persons and organizations who have partial familiarity with a particular context (Breidlid and Breidlid, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). For instance, the number of years that

a girl spends in school in the local context of Zwedru may not necessarily indicate what she has learned and is able to use to earn a dignified livelihood given the difficult circumstances of the school and the possibilities for employment. The underlying perception is that people should be compared to one another on the basis of what one can do or be. Moreover, assessments should instead be made with regards to the freedom that supports the quality of life from which a person can advance what s/he has reason to value (Sen, 1999). This infers for instance that opportunities which are available for a person to choose from forms an important part of education provision. The capability approach can be used to analyze the content of the education that is offered to girls in Zwedru in regards to for instance its usefulness in the labor market. The girls in this study are returnees, former refugees and IDPs whose educational experiences during the war are characterized by various challenges including limited access to education (see chapter 2). Another important aspect of the *capability approach* is that it is *multi-dimensional,* this means that it associates education provision with health- services, income, features of trade and governance (Sen, 1999). For example, applying Sen's ideas, Aikman and Unterhalter argue that with education a girl can make informed judgments about early marriage and family planning which can have impact on her own life and the wider society (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). This is important in post-conflict and fragile contexts where access to medical care and other resources might be scarce. Women and girls are more exposed to diseases in events of poor hygienic conditions, which are prevalent in most fragile contexts (Kirk, 2007; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). Additionally, there tend to have been fewer schools or school places available for girls in the first place (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). The political will to address the numerous challenges which women and girls face in education in the present Liberia will be at the core of the discussion in chapter 6.

Critics of the capability approach however note some down-sides of the concept. Critics of the capability approach base their disagreement on various issues which are presented as follow. According to Fraser who criticizes aspects of this approach, he claims that the model lacks room for injustices of recognition (Fraser, 1997, quoted in Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). This infers that for instance certain persons or institutions that may deserve to be appreciated for something particular are at risk of not being acknowledged. Young, 2000 and Stewart, 2004 claim that there is also an issue of the inability of the approach to engage with dimensions of group-based social

mobilization for democratization and gender equality (Young, 2000; Stewart, 2004 quoted in Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). This argument is similar to Fraser's critique above of the capability approach, but Young and Stewart place more emphasis on groups rather than on individuals. For example, in following the capability approach civil society organizations promoting democracy and human rights could be left out of the public eye and not given the credence that they merit. Lastly, the capability approach is said to have the predisposition to generalize, giving little credence to particular contexts (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). This infers that the capability approach may have the tendency to generalize peoples, gender and cultures. For example, in considering the last critique of the capability approach, one may say that women in traditional African societies for instance do not have the same opportunities as women in more developed societies in terms of educational prospects, hence it is unwise to generalize women.

The capability approach endeavors to encounter some of the *universalisms* in the concept of *rights*. Sen describes development as freedom, the freedom to think, talk, and act concerning what one values, and that is the meaning of development (Sen, 1999). The underlying point is that human prospering is more important than constricted notions of certain economic outcomes or benefits (Arnot and Mac an Ghaill, 2006). For instance the prevalence of SGBV in post-conflict Liberia is not the same as in more developed contexts. Against this background, securing the conditions for individuals to express what they value is vital to their well-being. According to the capability approach the individual should be at the center of any assessment of a situation that affects him (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Education reforms are ongoing in Liberia as part of efforts to achieve Education for All and meet the MDGs. Girls and women account for 52 % of the total population of Liberia, therefore, their education is vital to the growth and development of the war devastated nation.

The concept of culture in relation to education is presented in the next sub-section since culture is closely related to girls' education which is the focus of this study. Furthermore, the notion of culture is associated with education policies and practices in present Liberia as the education sector in Liberia is in its infancy in becoming accustomed to modern education reforms.

3.6   Education Policies and Practices: Language and Culture

This section explores education policies and practices in relation to the local context with the intent to gain insights into the manner in which policies are derived and implemented. Societal culture is fundamental to the expansion of theory, policy, and practice within an increasingly globalizing context in the field of education (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). Globalization and education are connected in that education is becoming increasingly similar in numerous ways because of the role of the World Bank and UNESCO in education provision worldwide (Burbules and Torres, 2010). Globalization has the tendency to nurture the infiltration of parallel policies and practices across countries which are economically, socially, politically and culturally unlike. The notion of *global architecture of education* is employed to describe the implementation of similar policies and practices across different countries and cultures (Breidlid, 2013). According to Dimmock and Walker globalization may penetrate a society through policy, leadership and management (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). However, supporters of the World Bank policies counter argue that these global arrangements are limited to formal organizational structures and policies and do not affect the inner activities of education in actual practical sense (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, 1978, cited in Holmarsdottir et al. 2013, p.12). From this point of view, teaching and learning in the classroom are not necessarily influenced by policies and decisions which come from the higher levels. Breidlid asserts that there is assimilation of national education systems, organizational structures and governance systems. He argues that by scrutinizing educational discourses across the globe one finds substantiation of the global architecture of education, even though the bank has made some modifications (Breidlid, 2013, p. 54). Similarly, Klees et al. emphasize that the World Bank, IMF, UNESCO and other institutions that enable and guide education globally have the predisposition to apply policies which are labelled successful in one context to other settings (Klees et al. 2012). When introducing new reforms in a post-conflict situation for instance, context should be a key factor in the process because cultures and war legacy may influence the implementation of policies and contribute to unintended implications.

Decentralization is explored through a cultural lens since similar reform has been recently implemented in Liberia. Dimmock and Walker emphasize concerns about the effectiveness and

appropriateness of decentralization in some contexts, highlighting the importance of societal culture ((Dimmock and Walker, 2000). Decentralization promotes the inclusion framework (Coleman and Early, 2005). However, it is significant to create an atmosphere which will allow its implementation. Dimmock and Walker argue that on the one hand decentralization and school-based management may place more power in the hands of the school principal. On the other hand it may yield higher participation of teachers and parents in the school. This can be linked to culture and practices of power relations which are prevalent in traditional African societies (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). This infers that while the idea of decentralization clearly promotes the inclusion framework, its implementation can be challenging in some local contexts. Taking the above ideas as point of departure, school leadership in the local context for instance might require specific competencies since the principal or administrator of a school may serve as a bridge between various parties in the education process, students, teachers, parents, the community and even international NGOs. Leading and managing in education requires a combination of various approaches in different settings. The concepts of leadership, management and administration overlap; their usage varies at different times, in diverse countries and in various professional cultures (Coleman and Early, 2005, p. 6). Leadership may require specific skills and abilities. Coleman and Early describe educational leadership as an aspect of management which requires individuals with far-sightedness and the talent to stimulate and enthuse others. Moreover, the managerial or administrative skills to plan and organize effectively or control resource are special qualities which are necessary (Law and Glover, 2000 as cited in Coleman and Early, 2005, p.7). This means that school leaders should be capable of persuading others to share in attaining common goals.

Curriculum reform links to societal culture as such themes as curriculum, teaching and learning relate to culture which carries the core values of the society (Dimmock and Walker, 2000). The challenges of implementing decentralization policies as well as curriculum reforms in certain contexts are worth mentioning. However, Freire (1970) asserts that modern education reforms are essential for the inclusion of all, the poorest and the marginalized as well. Nieto and Bodo (2010), drawing from Freire's (1970) concepts assert that learning is at the heart of schooling; therefore it is worthy that student learning be a major focus of education stakeholders. Decisions affecting education are grounded within specific ideological frameworks, therefore, policies and

practices should be viewed in terms of how they affect learning. These decisions may include assumptions about the nature of learning, capable students, language of instruction and who should be at the center of educational processes (Nieto and Bodo, 2010, p. 395). These processes may not always include all the people who aspire to achieve education. Relatedly Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) stresses that education should be extended to all as *empowering* people through education can bring about transformation in their lives and societies.

Language is a vital part of culture and May (2011) even equates language to culture, focusing on education. For instance, the use of English and French as exclusive languages of instruction in many schools in the global south may contribute to the exclusion of many people; teachers and students alike (Brock-Utne and Hopson, 2005). The effects of being denied the opportunity to use one's own language especially in education can be enduring. N'gugi presents it in the following way; "(…) and then I went to school, a colonial school, and this harmony was broken, the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture" (Ngugi, 1994, p.11). From this outlook, language and culture are inseparable entities, meaning that denying a group of people the use of their own language is equivalent to social and cultural subordination of the culture and people whose mother-tongue is repudiated (Brock-Utne and Hopson, 2005, p. 27). Breidlid (2013) stresses the need to discontinue "epistemic marginalization", the downgrading of other culture(s) and traditions. This can have long-term impacts on the people whose cultures are denied. Kymlicka and Patton state that there are numerous advantages in embracing and celebrating linguistic diversity (Kymlicka and Patton, 2003). The term multilingualism is described as the use of two or more languages and can refer to individuals or to societies (Biseth 2008. p. 2).

Multilingualism could allow more children in remote parts of SSA access to education since many school drop-outs are attributed to language barriers (Brock-Utne and Hopson, 2005). According to Biseth (2008) multilingualism could pave the way for widening the horizon of individuals in numerous ways. For instance, embracing indigenous languages in school contexts in traditional African societies could break the language barrier and possibly better accommodate both children and their parents in academic settings. Patten and Kymlicka argue that linguistic diversity is a real challenge of democratization around the world (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003, p. 3). This means that language policy in education is vital because of its relevance to the effective

delivery of a public education. Importantly, language has the potential to shape the future patterns of language use by the generations of children whose linguistic repertories are shaped by the school system (Patten and Kymlicka, 2003, p. 21). The underlying idea is that language differences among various groups of people poses both challenge and opportunity to democracy in education in terms of language policy. *Culture* is an integral part of education and *language* is a significant instrument for the transmission of culture. Culture encompasses the ways of living and existing of an individual, group or institution and corresponds to the values, customs, traditions, and ways of living which set apart one group of people from another (Hatoos and Huijser, 2010). Culture can change over time and can be influenced by various factors including education. Importantly, Gyekye argues that negative aspects of culture should be (Gyekye, 1997).

3.7   The Purpose of Formal Education

This section explores the purpose of schooling and relates education and culture in an effort to highlight the role of education in society. Education can be placed into 3 categories: formal education (national standardized system), non-formal education (organized learning outside of the formal framework) or informal or unplanned learning (Carm, 2012). Formal education is a basic service that every country ought to deliver to its citizens; it is a right, not a privilege (UNESCO, 2000). Education is an ongoing process; therefore it needs to be designed in a firm and maintainable way. Serpell notes that schooling or formal education has economic, cultural and pedagogic agendas. The economic itinerary of education can be linked to career expansion and subsequently, employment. The pedagogic agenda can be linked to learning, knowledge acquisition and wisdom. The cultural program is to transmit culture across generations (Serpell, 2003). According to Darnell and Hoem, the outcome of education appreciates change and continuity, conformity and originality, submission and freedom (Darnell and Hoem, 1996). This infers that education is a process which advances the whole person and offers various benefits. This seems to relate to Johnson's emphasis that the reason for schooling in the first place is to acquire knowledge, and this can change an individual and even the wider society. This means that both the content of educational materials and the processes involved in schooling are vital to the expected outcomes. Furthermore, the result of education may not always be in agreement with the intended purpose(s) since it is a process which advances the human mind. The

underlying intention of schooling is transformation or change, both in individuals as well as the wider society (Johnson, 2010).

Learning is at the core of formal education, the pedagogical itinerary of schooling (Serpell, 2003). One of the four schools investigated in this study is a vocational training institution; the other three are regular standardized schools. Johnson records that historically; learning by doing has been practiced in Liberia both in and outside of formal schooling over many generations. He therefore underscores that technical and vocational training or experiential learning should be even more emphasized in post-war Liberia because that will contribute to capacity building and the reconstruction process (Johnson, 2010). Experiential learning involves students routinely doing practical activities like sewing, masonry, carpentry and so on over a period and physically seeing the works of their own hands. Other forms of experiential learning can take place in more academic lessons as well, for instance laboratory activities.

The next section looks at the interrelationships between education and conflict. These concepts are explored as allusion to reforms in the education sector which includes new subjects in the curriculum.

3.8 Education and Conflict

This section briefly presents a framework derived from research in conflict zones, illustrating the possible connections between education and conflict. The underlying point is that education should promote peace and not fuel possible conflict. Exclusionary policies and practices in education can in fact contribute to war, which is exactly what happened in Liberia as mentioned earlier. Based on research in conflict zones as well as post-conflict circumstances, Davis, a scholar in education in emergency situations identifies six possible relationships between education and conflict (Davis, 2011, in Mundy and Peterson, 2011).

 The first possibility is that education can contribute to conflict. This relates to the exclusion of portions of the population. Exclusion can take place for instance when people do not have access to school because of the unavailability of schools. The process of education can also be a cause for certain people not to be able to participate in education. The content of the curriculum, how various groups in society are portrayed in the curriculum can easily be a marker of provocation if

it is negative. The manner in which decisions are made about education can also lead to exclusion. For example if civil society is sidelined from the decision making process.

The second possibility is that conflict can disrupt education. Under conditions of conflict the provision of education cannot take place as all stakeholders will be more concerned with and in search of safe places to get away from the conflict. Even after conflicts the consequences of conflicts can continue in schools in many ways. Children and staffs may be traumatized in the aftereffects of conflict for example.

The third possible situation is that schools can be sites of violence. For instance schools can be sites of SGBV and armed recruitment amongst others. Schools can also be sites of violence where teachers and students come under attack during school period. Moreover, people who seek refuge in school premises during times of crisis sometimes get to be attacked.

The fourth possible situation is that conflict can provide an opportunity for educational change. Most countries in the aftermath of chronic crisis try to investigate the reasons that led to the conflict in the first place. Such investigation could produce a reliable school system that will enhance precautionary measures.

As a fifth possibility, education can promote well-being. In post-conflict contexts, the provision of education needs to include specific components that will promote the well-being of students. Emergency education is described by Kirk as the rapid provision or restoration of education for people affected by conflict or natural disasters (Kirk, 2007; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). The opportunity for learning in such situations may be provided by a range of international organizations and institutions. The International Network for Education in Emergencies, INEE emphasizes that, in emergency circumstances quality education provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, which can sustain lives and even save them (INEE, 2013).

The sixth possible relationship is that education can contribute to peace-building and conflict prevention. This has to do with the role of schooling in peace-building and conflict preventions. It is noted that education will provide people with knowledge and skills that will allow them to make informed judgments, deterring conflict. The underlying idea is that peace-building education should include contents that will address historical problems and legacies of conflict.

Before summing up the chapter, the notion of quality in education is presented below since the EFA goals stress the notion of quality in education. Moreover, it serves to buttress the previous elaborations on the purpose of formal schooling and the possible relationships between education and conflict.

3.9 The notion of quality in education

According to UNICEF

> "Quality education includes: learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities, environments that are healthy, safe, protective, and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities. It includes content that is reflected in relevant curricula and the materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, prevention and peace. Taking place in processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society" (UNICEF working document, 2000).

The main points underlined in the above definition are *healthy* and *well-nourished* which correspond to (input), *trained teachers*, *child-centered approach* relate to (process) and *knowledge*, *skills* match up to (output). According to education scholars, quality education should include 3 main features; input, process and output (Holmarsdottir, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013).

Winthrop argues for a

> "(…) nuanced understanding of education quality in conflict contexts, one that connects the multiple dimensions of quality by drawing on the insights of children themselves as to the value they place on learning" (Winthrop, 2011; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p.123).

This understanding seems important for the conflict-affected setting of Liberia and specifically for the girls in this study because they are tied up in a grid of multifaceted issues as will be elaborated in the findings and discussions in chapters 5 and 6. To throw light on this, for example, children in these areas may have different needs than children in normal societies or children's needs may even fluctuate in the same society. Given the robustness associated with the role that education is expected to play in rebuilding the lives of children and their societies

after conflicts, it may be useful to listen to the voices of children themselves. Enshrined in Winthrop's thoughts about the notion of quality in education is that *quality* education is multi-dimensional, and children themselves are in the best position to tell what works for them. In providing education in zones affected by conflict, Winthrop categorizes "*reading enthusiasts* and *well-being enthusiasts*" among education providers. The two concepts refer to policy makers in education, international as well as local. Reading enthusiasts includes those that are narrowly focused on ensuring children learn fundamental reading skills, well-being enthusiasts involves a focus on the range of psychosocial and other benefits of schooling for young people (Winthrop, 2011; in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p. 123).

3.10   Summary of the chapter

This chapter has attempted to cover relevant theory for the discussions and analyses in chapter 6. Socializations theories, primary and secondary socialization were presented. Primary socialization is more related to influences from the close entourage at an early age in life while secondary socialization follows at a later stage and is usually detached from close relatives. The notion of social construction of reality was also elaborated. Gender theories, the WID, GAD, post structuralism and the capability approach were elaborated. Furthermore, concepts in gender and education including gender parity, gender equity and gender equality were explained. These analytical tools are used in analyzing gender related issues in education. The role of culture in relation to education reforms was expounded to illustrate cultural influences on education policies and practices. Davis' framework of possible relationships between education and conflict was provided as an allusion to the present education reconstruction process. The theoretical and conceptual framework underscores that contextualized educational policies and practices can contribute to girls' enrollment and completion of secondary school which is the focus of this study. Girls' full participation in education will contribute to EFA goals and the MDGs while enhancing a better society.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1   Introduction

This chapter will detail the methodological bedrocks of the study; a qualitative case study. Data for the study was collected through 26 individual interviews as well as observations in Liberia

between July and September of 2013 and also enquiry of official documents. The focus of this study being to explore secondary school girls' reintegration into formal school in Zwedru, I will begin by briefly expanding on the qualitative choice and explain why this approach was adopted. Definition of the research design, a case study, and justification for selecting the design comes next, then how I gained access to the research site is presented, followed by the sampling methods. Afterward an overview of the informants and the data collection methods are provided to illuminate the sources of information in the study. How the data was processed for analysis is explained to further enlighten on processes employed in the methodology. The succeeding sub-section presents my role as researcher; insider and outsider. This is deemed important for me to show my relationship to the study. The following sections present the general parameters and limitations of the study, ethical considerations that guide the study as well as the notions of reliability and validity as core concepts in the study.

4.2   The qualitative choice

Stakeholders in education including the Ministry of Education (MOE) relevant staffs as well as principals, teachers, parents and students in Zwedru were deemed suitable sources of information. Additionally, NGO representatives in Zwedru were asked to contribute to this study because of their role in the education sector as supporting and implementing partners. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the informants' proximity to the issues under scrutiny, the different agents were selected as informants to shed light on their activities and views on girls' education. The stakeholders interviewed in this study include providers and enablers of education as well as beneficiaries of the service. The underlying notion behind my selection of the diverse agents is that they have knowledge and experiences about different issues related to girls' education in Zwedru. Qualitative research gives perceptions and understandings of other people's lives and views. Within this paradigm, the researcher is concerned with the point of view of the informants and derives meaning from context(s) and processes. The qualitative choice was adopted in this study based on the awareness that the research approach can enhance the arena for data collection and hence contribute to finding answers to the research questions (see Bryman, 2012). An alternative to the qualitative choice to find out about girls' reintegration into secondary school could have been a broader quantitative study. Quantitative research is concerned with firsthand examination of social phenomena by means of statistical or numerical

data or calculation procedures. This allows for the development of theories and hypotheses pertaining to the phenomena (Cohen et al., 2000). The quantitative approach did not fit my study due to the objective and related requirements of the study.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the interrelated circumstances that influence girls' education in Zwedru, the case study design was adopted and is elaborated below.

4.2.1 The Case Study as a Research Tool

The case study design was embraced because of its flexibility, it allows for detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. Case study researchers characteristically examine the features of an individual unit (Bryman, 2012). The purpose of such examination is to review intensely and to analyze thoroughly the manifold phenomena that make up the progressions in the life cycle of the unit with the vision to establish generalities about the broader populace to which that unit belongs (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 185). The vision to establish generalities will be commented on later in the thesis. According to Hammersley and Atkinson, in a case, decisions must be made about where to observe and when, who to talk to and what to ask, as well as about what to record and how. In this process the researcher is not only determining what is and is not pertinent to the case under scrutiny but also usually sampling from the data available in the case. While these decisions are often not taken on purpose, it is important to make the principles employed clear and orderly to ascertain that data about the specific case have been sufficiently sampled (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006; p. 45 - 46). For instance this study looks at the various interconnected factors that influence secondary school girls' education in Zwedru, both within and outside of schools. The case study strategy is conducive for the focus of this study because it permits in-depth enquiry by interviews and observations of the overall situation of the girls in their natural environment. The case study design is one of the most widely used qualitative strategies; it provides an opening for in-depth study or a particular focus to develop a holistic view of that issue (Bryman, 2012). Case studies are usually valuable where complex questions have to be addressed in many-sided circumstances and where interrelated conditions affect people's lives (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006). Having elaborated on the qualitative choice and the case study design, the next sub-section looks at how I gained access to the research site.

4.3   Access to the research site: "Breaking the Ice"

The main site of this study is Zwedru in the Southeast of Liberia. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has the overall responsibility for education in the country; therefore I had to contact the MOE in Monrovia to gather some pertinent information. Zwedru was selected as site for this research because earlier studies on girls' education in Liberia had not covered this area due to security reasons and lack of adequate roads as stated before. Moreover, gender disparity in secondary schools in the Southeast region is very high as compared to other regions in Liberia (MOE, 2011a). Also, the low costs of lodging and general up-keep were a factor in my selection of Zwedru as site for this study.

I was born and raised in Liberia and quite familiar with the cultures and values of the people. However, this would be my first visit in more than twenty years since I left the country because of the civil war. In view of this I needed to re-establish old relationships and build new ones to facilitate this research project. It was quite a challenge for me to make the necessary contacts especially in the initial stages of the study due to communication problems. There were no direct telephone numbers or e-mail addresses of MOE authorities available on the official web-site of the MOE. Nevertheless, sometime in 2013, I met and spoke with a Liberian delegation from the extractive industry of Liberia- LEITI when they came to Oslo, Norway on an official mission. Through them upon their return I was informed about research practices in Liberia; it is open to all as long as ethical issues are respected. Afterwards, upon my arrival in Monrovia in late July of 2013, I was opportune to attend the national celebration of Liberia's Independence Day on July 26th in the town of Tubmanburg. I met and spoke with authorities of the Ministry of Education at this celebration. Through these interactions, it was confirmed that I did not need to submit an official application letter to conduct research in the country even though I had that available. I was then granted a verbal permission from the requisite authority of the Ministry of Education to conduct this study. Cohen et al. emphasize that an integral part of a research is to gain access to the institutions where the research will take place and be accepted and granted permission to carry out the study (Cohen et al., 2000, p.55).

Having gained permission to conduct this study in Liberia from the "gate-keepers", the authority in charge (Patton, 2004), I proceeded to solicit old and new contacts to provide me with further relevant information. Eventually I got in touch with the administrative authorities of Grand

Gedeh County where Zwedru is the capital. I then presented official documents from the Oslo and Akershus University College to ascertain the purpose of this study. With that I was given the endorsement to conduct the study in Zwedru. I began the project in Zwedru, not in Monrovia, because I was warned that the roads would before long be inaccessible because of the rainy season. I was in Zwedru for four weeks where I spoke with students, teachers, parents and NGO representatives. I spoke with this diverse group of informants because of their proximity to education in Zwedru, they were expected to give multiple perspectives on the issue. I later returned to Monrovia to continue the process when I needed to consult with the Ministry of Education for their information and views on the subject. Following this elucidation on how I gained access to the research site, the next sub-section will describe the process of sampling of informants.

4.4   Sampling method(s) and sample size

Because this study set out to explore secondary school girls' reintegration into formal school in Zwedru, various participants that are juxtaposed the issue were required. The administrative authorities of Zwedru introduced me to the principal of a Governmental public secondary school. The informants in this study were selected strategically, and I used "purposive sampling", based on the informants' proximity to girls' education in Zwedru with the aim to solicit from them contributions towards answering the research question(s) (see Bryman, 2012). Likewise, the technique of snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012) was adopted in the process of selecting my informants. The principal that I was first introduced to became a "gate-keeper". Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe gate keeper as one who is knowledgeable of the area and the subject. The principal of the Government school subsequently took me to his two vice-principals as they too were knowledgeable of the subject. The three school administrators from the Governmental public school were informants in the study. The principal later introduced me to three other administrative staffs of two new schools who also became informants. I considered private and public schools with supposedly dissimilar socio-economic circumstances in the sampling process. One school teacher from a private school also became informant in the study after I met him at his private job in the Zwedru community. The logic here is that this mixing of informants will hopefully provide views from individuals with diverse experiences and outlooks. The principals and teachers then introduced me to some secondary school students, and four of them,

two boys and two girls were eventually selected as participants in this study. The informants in this study represent the four secondary schools operating in Zwedru. In order to protect the anonymity of the informants in the study, there will be no specific references to public and private schools in the findings and discussion in chapters 5 and 6.

During my four weeks of stay in Zwedru, I also identified additional informants and took contact directly with them, the NGO staffs in the area that are working with education. The four NGOs in the study are Uddannelse Skaber Udvikling (IBIS) (the main education implementing partner), German Agro Action (GAA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Medica Mondiale. The activities of these institutions will be elaborated in the findings and discussions in chapters 5 and 6. The first NGO representative I met and spoke with was the education coordinator of NRC in Zwedru. The coordinator became one of my key informants at the NGO level. Upon concluding my interviews in Zwedru, I proceeded to Monrovia where I contacted the Ministry of Education and conducted interviews with several key persons concerning the situation in Zwedru. Through the first authority that I contacted, others were recommended due to their closeness to girls' education policies and related matters.

Sample size is a vital aspect of qualitative studies. Deciding a sample size can be problematic especially from the onset of a study in that there could be a need for more or less participants as the study progresses (Bryman, 2012). In the case of this study, the intention at the initial stage was to interview more students, especially females. But this was not possible because the period of my fieldwork coincided with vacation in Liberia and also there are not many females at the secondary school level. In view of this, the research questions had to be slightly changed. Kvale (1996) states that one may interview as many as needed to know what one need to know. In order to have my research questions addressed from the perspectives of a diverse group of informants; I interviewed twenty six participants in Zwedru and Monrovia. In Zwedru the participants included principals, vice principals, teachers, students, parents as well as NGO staffs. Authorities and personnel at the Ministry of Education were interviewed in Monrovia. The interviews were individual and lasted for approximately one and a half hours each.

4.4.1 Overview of the informants in Zwedru and Monrovia

Note: Students' ages are between 15 -24 years due to the long period of the war

Category of informants	Location of Informants	Number of informants
Students	Zwedru	**4 (2 girls & 2 boys)**
Teachers	Zwedru	**5 (4 males & 1 female)**
Principals	Zwedru	**1 (male)**
Vice Principals	Zwedru	**4 (3 males & 1 female)**
Parents	Zwedru	**4 (2 males & 2 females)**
NGOs	Zwedru	**4 (4 males)**
MOE	Monrovia	**4 (3 males & 1 female)**
Total number of informants		**26**

4.5   Data collection Method(s) and Analysis of the Data

This section describes the methods that were employed in the data collection process in the study namely; interview, observation supported by field notes and review of official documents. How the data was processed is also elaborated.

4.5.1 Interview as a qualitative research method in my study

The interview is widely used in qualitative research because of its flexibility, allowing for questions to emerge from the course of the exchange among the speakers (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allow for possible inclusion or exclusion of questions depending on the responses (Bryman, 2012). Kvale describes interview guide as tool which can be adjusted to facilitate the understanding of information which is of interest to the interlocutors. He affirms that, if you want to know how people understand their world and their life, you should talk to them. In the qualitative paradigm, researchers seek to understand the world from the ''subjects' point of view (Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interview were employed in this study and required interview guides to help both the interviewer and the interviewee to use their time in the

interview situation effectively. The interview guide is orderly and all-inclusive and the issues to be explored are defined in advance (Patton, 2002, p. 343). In my study individual interview guides differed in terms of their contents as I was in search of both facts and statistics, beliefs and attitudes as well as accounts and life histories (see Kvale, 1996). The subjects of interest included policy issues and local educational leadership as well as girls' experiences and challenges. The interview is extensively used in case studies because through interviews the researcher is able to enter into the mindset of the interviewee. Hence, a qualitative interview begins with the postulation that the viewpoint of others is significant, comprehensible and possible to be made explicit (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Cresswell (1997) records that interview is a more effective tool compared to other methods to understand human activities. Qualitative researchers are in pursuit of information which is relevant to the subject of investigation, with the aim to construct knowledge. Both the interviewer and the interviewee during the course of interviews deliberate on subjects of mutual interests in order to gain new insights on the various themes (Bryman, 2012). The interview guides in the study are provided in the appendix.

4.5.1.1 Downsides of interview as qualitative research method

According to Hammersley and Atkinson there are some downsides to the interview as qualitative method which are worth mentioning. The researcher can influence the outcome of the interview through their choice, perception and attitude (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2006). Moreover, interviews may be time consuming compared to other methods and flexibility in wording the questions can influence the types of responses (Creswell, 1997). In this study, the interviews took place in non-influencing environments, the offices of the informants usually, as well as office space that was procured by me for those interviewees who did not have offices. The interviews and the views of the interviewees are reported as accurately as possible. Despite the downsides of the interview as research tool, it was deemed a vigilant approach because it allowed me to get the informants' own voices and perceptions on the various themes.

4.5.2 Observation as a qualitative research method in my study

Observation is another well-known and often used method in social research. Observation allows for the researcher to describe the setting that was observed. This includes the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in various activities as well as the meaning of what was observed from the perspectives of the observed (Patton, 2002, p. 262). The two

approaches that were employed in this study are *structured observation* and *observer-as-participant.* The structured observation is systematic as the names suggests and observer-as-participant is described as a situation where the researcher is known to the group and has less extensive contact with the group (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 310). In this study, I employed structured observations to observe the school environment, mainly physical set-ups. See the appendix for the themes of the structured observation. In being observer-as-participant, I stood in a queue which led to the school clerk during the registration process. I was among students and parents who were lined up. In this process I had no influence over the situation being observed. At this stage I was observing behavior, listening to what was said in conversation both between others and with me, the fieldworker, and asking questions (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). My observations included social interactions between me and my informants, in the setting of the latter. The main advantage of observational research is flexibility, allowing the researcher to measure behavior directly, not reports of behavior or intentions (Holmarsdottir, 2013, p. 1). Because the human memory is not able to retain all information as one may desire, "field notes" help to keep track of relevant information (Bryman, 2012, p. 447). I took notes whenever I saw the need to do so in order to most accurately record various situations that were of relevance.

During the period of my fieldwork schools were not officially opened in Liberia, but registration for the school year 2013 / 2014 was ongoing at all of the four schools in Zwedru. Students and teachers alike were on their campuses for significant periods of the working hours up to 2:00 PM conducting cleaning activities in preparation for the opening which was slated for the 15th of September, 2013. The opening date unfortunately did not fit well with my schedule for the fieldwork in Zwedru. Therefore, my observation did not cover classroom activities such as teaching methodologies and other pedagogical practices neither did it cover girls' activities and responses in class. Basically, I observed interactions among students, between staffs and students, and the general learning environment.

4.5.2.1 Downsides of observation as a qualitative research method

The main drawback of observation is that it is limited to behavioral variables. This means it cannot be used to study academic variables like student achievement for instance. Another question is that observational data is not usually generalizable. The observed may not show their normal behavior during the period of observation. By extending the period of observation

however, the researcher can improve this limitation. Lastly, sometimes observation raises questions about reliability and validity. This is linked to limited sample and limited situation to observe which can lead to a multitude of understandings. The validity of observation can be enhanced through diverse observers (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this study the observations were carried out in the natural settings of the observed and at some point the researcher was observer-as-participant and had no actual influence on the situation being observed (see Cohen et al. 2000).

4.5.3 Document review in qualitative research

Document review or analysis is considered a valuable tool in social research (Bryman, 2012). Documents are used to corroborate and supplement substantiation from other sources providing more specifics in many cases. The researcher is required to go through an orderly process in the reviewing of documents, for example, identification of relevant documents, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of findings (Yin, 1994).

4.5.3.1 Specific Documents Reviewed in the Study

- Final Report: National Policy Conference on Education and Training - MOE (2011a)
- National Policy on Girls' Education – MOE (2006b)
- Liberia Education Administrative Regulations – MOE (2011c)

 For the purpose of this study, the above documents were read fully. I read the documents completely, highlighting points that were of relevance to this study and then took notes of outstanding issues. I repeatedly went through points that were deemed relevant until I gathered a good comprehension of the documents. These documents are referred to throughout the thesis and specific issues of relevance will be elaborated in the findings and discussion.

4.5.3.2 Challenges of the document review

Document review does not go without limitations. Sometimes it can be difficult if not impossible to gain access to the particular documents that the researcher has need for. Also, reliability of documents may be of concern as sometimes, documents can be incomplete or outdated (Bryman, 2012). The particular documents reviewed in this study were given to me by the senior policy

advisor of the Ministry of Education during my interview with him. The documents were his personal copies which were in use by him and he allowed me to have them upon my request.

4.6   Recording, Transcription and Coding of Data

The preferred practice in social research according to Bryman (2012) is to record interviews on tape. I was unable to record some of my interviews on tape due to the political climate in the country, trust was delicate. During the period of my field work, a journalist was arrested and imprisoned for a sensitive news report and the issue was popular in the press. This might have influenced my MOE informants' notion about recording of interviews. The MOE authorities specifically did not allow me to do recording of any of the interviews with them, so I took notes on a pad during these interviews. This was slightly demanding but my fluency in the language, knowledge of the culture, and the flexibility of semi-structured interviews compensated in the process. I did not need interpreters for any of the interviews, all of them were conducted in English. In Zwedru, the interviews with the principals, teachers, students as well as parents were recorded on tape. Likewise, the interviews with NGO informants were recorded on tape. Eventually, the data from all the recorded interviews were transcribed and all the notes together were coded. According to Cohen et al, the code serve as shorthand device to label, separate, compile and organize data. Coding facilitates better understanding and enhances analysis of the data (see Cohen et al., 2000). Eventually, the data were placed into categories based on the research questions. The codes were subsequently revisited and re-arranged on later occasions to regroup the codes and reduce them. At the end of the coding process, major themes and sub-themes were identified and are elaborated in the findings and discussion chapters below.

4.7   The researcher as Insider - Outsider: Some Self- reflections

This sub-section presents my reflections about my role as probable insider – outsider researcher in order to establish my connection with the project. Bryman notes that researchers cannot easily be free of biases because of human nature but should be self-aware and avoid unwarranted biases (Bryman, 2012). A researcher's personal beliefs and values might shape an investigation, but the findings of this study mirror the views of the respondents rather than mine as researcher. Dwyer and Buckle (1996) assert that, the dichotomy of describing researcher as *insider* or *outsider* is a constructed position. This means that any individual can carry on a research project anywhere as long as s/he respects ethical principles and the norms of academic research. Dwyer and Buckle

underscore that *insider – outsider* researchers can simultaneously belong to two groups, insider as well as outsider, and these groups are not necessarily dichotomous. In so doing, they embrace the notion of "the space between". The underlying point is that a researcher can be insider and outsider rather than insider or outsider (Dwyer and Buckle, 1996, p. 54). Another aspect to take into consideration is that being a woman could have constrained me from obtaining vital information; but also it could be a door opener to settings that are less assessable to men (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 93). Although I had some knowledge of the status of female access to education in Liberia, I did not fully understand the totality of the issues that hamper girls' participation in secondary education. Furthermore, the present circumstances with the involvement of the international community were new. For my status as insider – outsider, I was entering into the field as researcher in new educational circumstances. Being born and raised in Liberia makes me an insider, but does spending more than half of my life outside of the country make me an outsider? As a researcher, it was both an advantage and a dilemma. The insider – outsider status was advantageous in that interviews and observations were carried out in a familiar environment. There was seemingly a sense of reliance, allowing the informants to speak to me without any reservations. This may have reduced the likelihood of being denied any insider or local information. Hammersley and Arkinson (1995) record that; field work in social research is enabled by building and keeping relations. Kirk notes that trust is weak in post-conflict context(s) (Kirk, 2007, cited in Mundy and Peterson, 20011), making relations important in this study. My familiarity with the environment and people may have paved the way for more candid interactions with my informants. Especially at the grass root level in the schools, my informants were very open in the interviews. They told me on several occasions during interviews that this was in fact an occasion for their voices to be heard. I also realized that during observations I was less noticeable as some of the students and staffs generally offered me space in the lines for registration because they thought I was one of the parents. Mostly being an advantage in my case, there could however also be challenges particularly associated with me being an insider - outsider researcher. Some of my informants knew that I had been away over a significant period of time, and that quite naturally I had taken on some other cultures and values during the years that I spent outside of Liberia. Could this have impacted the responses that I got from my informants? Moreover, the informants were aware that I was there for the purpose of social research. Were there any suspicions about my person and the project I was carrying out,

thus influencing the responses that I got? There could be many other questions and thoughts surrounding this issue. Nevertheless, I did not experience any deviousness during the interviews and interactions that I had with my informants in Zwedru likewise Monrovia.

4.8   Limitations and challenges of the study

Security and transportation were challenges for me both in Zwedru and Monrovia. Motor-bikes were the only source of public transport in Zwedru and a major source in Monrovia. This was not a preferred means of transportation given the complex security situations and prevalence of SGBV in Liberia. Because of this, I was unable to visit some of the projects that I was informed about by the NGO informants in Zwedru. An alternative to motor-bike riding could have been to walk for several kilometers, but I did not feel secure enough to take that route. Another challenge that could be a limitation is related to informants. At the Ministry of Education I could not speak with two key senior authorities whose contributions to this study would have been appreciated. They are the authorities responsible for finances or budget and also planning, research and development. Their official engagements did not allow for them to grant me interviews. However, I spoke with other officials who provided me with useful information for the study. Also, there was a dilemma whereby I was perceived as a problem solver, especially in the schools. Some of my respondents asked me to talk to higher authorities and policy makers about issues that were pressing to them. I responded by explaining my role as a researcher, but I am not sure whether that was convincing enough. According to Bryman, it may be impossible to overcome the power imbalance in the research relationship. On the one hand, I felt that I was mainly at the receiving end, extracting information from my informants and not being reciprocal in any way. On the other hand, traditions of research encourage that the researcher should show appreciation by giving something back to the informants and their institutions, but these should be in conformity with research ethics (see Bryman, 2012). In this regard I look forward to sending the final product of this study to my informants in Liberia.

4.9   Ethical Considerations in the study

Ethical principles are centered on four fundamental overlapping contemplations; that no harm is done to participants, that there is informed consent, that there is no invasion of privacy and that there is no deception, portraying something to be what it is not (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). These ethical principles were kept to the best of my ability throughout the course of this project.

My informants were given all necessary information about the project; this included information about their rights as participants. The researcher's role and integrity are essential to the quality of knowledge that a study will produce. As part of my efforts to respect the ethics of research as required, I began the study by writing up a research proposal and gaining the approval of the Oslo and Akershus University College and the Department of Multicultural and International Education (MIE). Before I got into the field, a detailed letter of consent was written, informing the potential participants about the study and requesting their participation. In the letter, participants were informed that their participations were completely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time in the process of the study if they saw a need to do so. Furthermore, I used simple language in the interview guides and in all communications that I had with my informants to avoid possible misinterpretations due to ambiguity (Kvale, 1996). Confidentiality was also accentuated as interviews were conducted in non-influential spaces that were confirmed as unproblematic by interviewees (Cohen et al., 2000). The interviews with students and parents took place in an office that was procured by me and all the other interviews with school staffs, MOE and NGOs took place in their respective offices. The identities of informants are kept anonymous; the names used in this study in the findings and discussion in chapters 5 and 6 are given by me and have no relations to any real person(s).

4.10 Triangulation

The notion of triangulation is an important component of qualitative research which is given credence in this study. Triangulation is an essential component in qualitative research as it contributes to increased "trustworthiness" of a study. Triangulation allows the researcher to get a better understanding of the subject that is being investigated through a perusal of different perceptions (Cresswell, 1997). It allows the researcher to double-check and grasp a comprehensive representation of the data. Qualitative research can rely on various kinds of triangulation. For instance, it may be variety of methods, diverse sources of data or different researchers in the study of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). This infers that a phenomenon can be investigated through the use of diverse methods or different points of view. The model of triangulation was adopted in this study in order to solicit information ranging from the policy level to the grass-roots in the education sector. Individual interviews, observations and field notes as well as analysis of official documents were used in the study. The data provided

different perspectives on the issue of investigation as is presented in the findings and discussion chapters below. Triangulation contributes to greater reliability and validity.

4.11 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are vital in qualitative research. The social science surrounding *knowledge* comprehends human reality as socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This relates to the purpose of social research which is to attain new knowledge, new comprehensions and thoughts of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). The duty of the researcher is therefore to illustrate what was said and done in the places and situations which were researched (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Reliability can be explained as the possibility of reproducing the results of a study on other occasions by other researchers, similar to replication which is grounded in details (Bryman, 2012). This infers that all the procedures in a piece of research should be clear and transparent. According to Cresswell, another criterion in evaluating social research is validity which involves the examination of the accuracy of the conclusions of a study. Validity is concerned with the degree of effectiveness and efficiency associated with the method(s) of enquiry in a study before deriving a conclusion (Cresswell, 1997). The underlying point is that researchers should take into account all ethical and procedural precautions to ascertain the legitimacy of a research. Reliability and validity are fundamental mechanisms in social research which should be respected in all stages of research. Cohen et al. put it bluntly that if a research project is invalid then it is worthless (Cohen et al., 2000). But there are reservations about the possibility of constancy of results especially in qualitative studies. Kvale and Brinkman (2008) note that to claim "consistency" of research findings in qualitative studies may be overly ambitious. This can be attributed to the view that context(s) may vary from one epoch to another.

For the evaluation of reliability and validity of case study research, Yin names four points which are to be taken into consideration. These points are; construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. The points are summarized as follow:

- Construct validity means establishing concrete operational measures for the concept being studied
- Internal validity emphasizes the formation of a causal relationships; this means certain situations are shown to lead to other situations
- External validity relates to the possibility to generalize the findings of the study

- Reliability means illustrating the processes of the study. For instance the possibility to repeat the data collection methods (Yin, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba claim that the concepts of reliability and validity can be applied to qualitative studies. But others argue against employing these concepts to qualitative studies due to their nearness to quantitative research. This has encouraged a view of alternative form(s) of evaluation in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is another approach employed in the evaluation of qualitative research. This was proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and embraced by many scholars. All of the characteristics of trustworthiness have a corresponding equal to the quantitative research criteria for evaluation; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Bryman, 2012, p. 49). Hamersley and Atkinson (1995) record an additional criterion for evaluating qualitative studies, the notion of "relevance" which is centered on the significance of the topic. Throughout the process of this study, ethical considerations have been at the core with the concepts of reliability and validity as integral part of the project. For instance, the findings of the study are fundamentally based on the views of the informants along with review of relevant documents which are provided. As mentioned above triangulation is an approach which was adopted to strengthen the reliability and validity or the trustworthiness of the research.

4.12 Summary of the chapter

In undertaking this research project, I carefully considered what methods to employ in order to depict in the best possible way a clear picture of secondary school girls' education in Liberia. My intention throughout is to provide rich illustrations rather than numbers and statistics, this is the basis for my choice of qualitative methods in the study. Triangulation was assumed to allow me to gain perceptions from various sources to improve the reliability and validity of the project. The field work was both a challenge and a rewarding experience as elaborated above. Because of the importance attached to ethical practices in research, I took on the responsibility to find equilibrium between my quest for knowledge and respect for the participants' rights and well-being (see Cohen et al. 2000).

CHAPTER 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

The overall objective of this study is to explore the process of education reconstruction in the post-conflict context of Liberia with emphasis on the reintegration of returnee girls in secondary school. The education sector in Liberia is being reconstructed following fourteen years of civil war which ended in 2003. The data in this chapter are based on field-work that I conducted in Liberia from July to September of 2013. The findings are derived from individual interviews, observations and field-notes, as well as review of official documents. Data for this study have been provided by the Ministry of education as well as NGOs, principals, teachers, students and parents in Zwedru. I formulated three research questions to guide the study namely:

1. How is the Government of Liberia addressing the need to have an educated female population?

2. How are NGOs contributing to meet the educational needs of the female population?

3. What are returnee girls' challenges to access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru, and how are these challenges influenced by the wider community?

The findings are presented in three main categories, constructed in accordance with the research questions. The data is separated into themes to facilitate the discussion and analysis in chapter 6 (see Cohen et al., 2004). Some of the issues are cross-cutting, and some seem to have greater effects than others.

5.2 How is the Government of Liberia addressing the need to have an educated female population?

The information in this section is based on review of official documents as well as interviews. This first category will look at the education act, its mission and vision for education in Liberia, as well as other education reforms which have been put in place. The Ministry of Education notable reforms are: Education Act, Decentralization of MOE authority, Curriculum Reform, Girls' Education Unit and Girls' Education Policy. Additionally, the MOE's view on the notion of *quality in education* is provided in this section.

5.2.1 Education Act of 2011 and its Mission and Vision for Education

The Education Act of 2011 was enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia, repealing the Education Law of 2001. The new act defines the functions of the ministry and the responsibilities of various actors. According to the Education Act, the mission and vision for Education in Liberia are as follow:

Mission: To provide all Liberians with the opportunity to access and complete affordable education of a quality, relevance and appropriateness that meets their needs and that of the nation (MOE, 2011a, p.10).

Vision: A system of education that is flexible, evolves with time and fully meets the needs and aspirations of the people individually and collectively as a nation (MOE, 2011a, p. 10).

Noteworthy points in the both statements are the significance and suitability of education to learners as well as flexibility and adoption to changes.

5.2.2 Decentralization of MOE authority

As noted in chapter 2, the Ministry of Education has decentralized some of its authority by creating County Education Boards in all of the counties in Liberia. The exact nature of decentralization adopted by the Ministry of Education is devolution. *Devolution* involves the transference of service delivery responsibility to independent regionalized levels of the sector (MOE, 2011a). The MOE senior policy advisor was explaining the decentralization policy to me in an interview, he said that

County Education Boards have been established in all of the counties. The Board is the local organ which implements the Basic Education program of the Ministry in accordance with policies and guidelines developed by the Ministry. The Boards will be responsible for educational activities within the counties, including hiring of qualified personnel in the schools as well as the budget and annual report of schools under its authority. Also the Ministry has launched school grants through the County Boards for the purchase of school materials in the counties.

When I asked him what if certain policies are not working satisfactorily he said

policies can come from both ways, from the Ministry as well as the local level.

This last comment from the MOE policy advisor seems difficult to link to the previous explanation on decentralization.

5.2.3 Curriculum Reform: 2011

The MOE authority also said in the interview that in collaboration with their international partners they had revised and distributed new curriculum for schools as part of their reform programs. He added that

the new subjects in the curriculum are in accordance with the United Nations Peace Building Mission and its Liberian configuration as support to the Ministry of Education to enhance peaceful co-existence among Liberian students. It is especially important for girls because of the prevalence of SGBV.

Core subjects such as mathematics and science have been expanded in the curriculum for secondary schools (MOE, 2011a).

The senior consultant at the GEU said that the secondary school curriculum has new subjects incorporated; *Peace, Citizenship Education* and *Human Rights*. These subjects are supposed to be taught in all classes at the secondary school level.

The curriculum reform was introduced simultaneously with in-service training of teachers and education personnel on effective pedagogy. Similar training is offered to aspiring teachers in the Rural Teacher Training Institutes to establish enduring support mechanisms for both national and local levels in education. The content of the teacher training includes knowledge on conflict resolution and other skills to promote peaceful co-existence (MOE, 2011a).

In line with the curriculum reform, the Strategic Roadmap (2013) reveals that a new *inclusive history text-book* on the history of Liberia is being written.

The new curriculum takes into account the use of mother tongue as language of instruction in primary schools, grade 1 to 6. Since the introduction of formal schooling in Liberia in the 1800s the language of instruction at all levels has been English exclusively. In the Zwedru area there are several mother-tongues but they understand one another. An NGO informant said that mother-tongue has been introduced in 5 pilot schools.

The MOE policy advisor said that

the former curriculum for Liberian schools was revised because students prepared through the implementation of the former syllabuses generally performed below the standard of the common

regional West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams at the completion of secondary schools. Because the previous curriculum was inadequate, some private proprietors of schools used additional materials alongside that of the MOE. This resulted in the implementation of diverse curriculum in Liberian schools therefore it was necessary to make alterations.

5.2.4 Girls Education Unit (GEU)

The information included in this segment is based on interview with the senior consultant of the GEU at MOE. He said that the Ministry in collaboration with its international partners has established the special Girls Education Unit (GEU). The GEU was established as a resource center to facilitate research on girls' education. The three major programs of the GEU are: 1) Special Girls Education Initiative (SGEI), 2) Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and 3) Gender Equitable Education Achievement Program (GEEA). These three programs are being implemented by the GEU in specific counties in Liberia in the form of pilot projects to inform policy decisions and practices. The senior consultant continued by saying

The SGEI targets girls who are out of school; dropped out due to pregnancy, developed into single mothers etc. and it is sponsored by Plan International - Liberia. The Millennium MCC sponsored by USAID focuses on primary school boys and girls. The GEEA program focus is on the improvement of the performance of boys and girls in core subjects (math, science and social studies).

Zwedru is not among the sites where the GEU projects are being implemented and the informant said that decisions for project sites depend on a lot of factors including funding.

5.2.5 National Policy on Girls Education

The policy was established by the Ministry of Education in 2006 with support from UNICEF, it details the rules and regulations governing girls' education in Liberia. The policy states

> The 1984 census revealed that women and girls in Liberia constitute more than half of the nation's population and perform about 80% of all productive activities in rural agriculture and other sectors. Yet, women and girls have not been given the basic equal rights and opportunities in human resource and educational development thereby making them the most vulnerable group of learners (MOE, 2006b, p. 17).

The policy document does not say anything about the circumstances of girls after the war.

The goal and the objectives of the *National Policy on Girls' Education* are presented below to through light on MOE's vision for girls' education in Liberia.

Goal: To develop the girl child to become a loyal citizen and make meaningful and continuous contribution toward her development and the nation as a whole (MOE, 2006b)

The goal emphasizes the over-all improvement of girls and the objectives below relay the approaches through which girls' progress will be achieved, the objectives have a set target for 2015.

Objectives:

a) To ensure access, relevance at all levels and in all educational programs and services for the girl child by 2015;

b) To ensure equitable geographic distribution of educational opportunities for girls in Liberia, by 2015;

c) To reduce by 80% all obstacles hindering the enhancement of girls' education in Liberia by 2015;

d) To reduce by 100% the gap of gender disparity between the girl child completing primary, secondary and tertiary institutions by ensuring that the girl child is provided scholarship and other supports to remain in school;

e) To reduce by 15% the high rate of illiteracy among women by 2015 in Liberia by encouraging women to attend adult literacy class;

f) To provide universal basic education through the formal and non-formal processes for girls in order to help improve their living standards and tackle the immediate problems of illiteracy, health, sanitation, and poverty by 2015;

g) To reduce the dropout rate by 50% of school girls by 2015;

h) To provide encouragement and incentives for girls toward their retention and enhanced performance in school (MOE, 2006b, p. 6).

The underlying idea of the various reforms relate to inclusion. The new subjects introduced in the curriculum can also be linked to inclusion in that they promote respect and coexistence. Moreover, establishing a special GEU as well as the National Policy on Girls' Education indicate efforts to improve girls' participation in education.

5.2.6 The notion of quality in education

With reference to the global agenda to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was deemed necessary for me to solicit the view of the senior policy advisor of MOE on the notion of quality in education. He said:

"Quality education should include adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers and staff with good salaries and incentives. It depends on the perspective. Generally, it is education that makes a student / individual to function effectively in society. Education that is applicable to the labor market. Attributes include: good leadership, adequate instructional materials, effective and efficient monitoring, student friendly environment, qualified teachers and so on. It depends on the context".

The above quote underlines various aspects of education delivery which I attempt to place in three categories to match it to the UNESCO definition and its' analysis which consist of *input*, *process* and *output*. For this system of analysis (see Holmarsdottir, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). In analyzing the MOE authority's explanation of the notion of quality, *Input* would be centered on the wellbeing of the learners but it seems to be drowning in the definition. *Process* incudes infrastructure and qualified teachers with incentives and *output* would include knowledge that is applicable to the labor market. This will be further elaborated in the discussion in chapter 6.

5.2.7 Challenges to Girls' Education According to the MOE

This section briefly describes the challenges faced by MOE concerning my subject of investigation according to the three documents reviewed in the study namely: *Final Report: National Policy Conference on Education and Training* (MOE, 2011a), *National Policy on Girls Education* (MOE, 2006b), and *Liberia Education Administrative Regulations* (MOE, 2011c). Additionally the challenges according to perceptions of the MOE policy advisor are provided.

When I asked the MOE authority about the progress of education reconstruction in Liberia he said:

Our greatest challenge is funding, we work with a very tight budget. Also the Ministry has a low capacity in terms of qualified personnel, this includes teachers. It is difficult for us to pay visits to the counties when we don't have the funds.

MOE (2011a) reports several challenges that the Ministry is faced with: *ghost teachers* (teachers and MOE staffs whose names are on the payroll but are not existent on the job due to various reasons including death), *influx of unqualified teachers* (volunteers who entered the education system in the early aftermath of the war and are holding on to positions as teachers due to various reasons including demand for compensation and lack of other job opportunities etc.), *lack of infrastructure*, *lack of accountability structures* and *low capacity of MOE* (MOE, 2011a).

According to another document (MOE, 2006b), challenges to girls' education include *poverty* and *cultural practices* which cannot be addressed through curriculum reform. The Liberian social and administrative structure is governed by traditional leaders who are deeply attached to their cultural norms and values, this is a *domain of men* that women find difficult to break. Moreover, *armed conflict* and its effects on girls which includes *sexual abuse* and *harassment* are challenges to girls' education (MOE, 2006b).

(MOE, 2011a) reasoned that:

(…) secondary education level remains largely untouched (…). Secondary school system as constituted today is not strong enough to address current demand. Fewer than one in five students enrolled at the primary level today will graduate from 12th grade. In the rural areas, and particularly in the Southeast these figures are more discouraging (MOE, 2011a, p. 115).

The report further noted that there is an

urgent need to address the myriad of challenges facing secondary education. These challenges can be condensed into four areas: Funding Priorities, Enrollment Figures and School Distribution, and Teacher Training and Instructional Materials. This is by no means comprehensive; it is only a snapshot of areas for concern (MOE, 2011a, p. 115).

The interview with the MOE policy advisor as well as the various documents reviewed maintained that girls' education is overwhelmed by huge defies at both national and local levels.

5.2.8 How the Government of Liberia is addressing challenges to education reconstruction

Necessary quotes from interviews with MOE authorities as well as citation(s) from certain documents which are only referred to, not reviewed in the study, are presented in this section to illuminate the activities of the Government of Liberia in addressing educational challenges and especially for girls. Approaches taken on by the Government of Liberia to address challenges in

education include: 1) Education Sector Plan (ESP) which was adopted in 2009. This is described as a political intention to rebuild collaboratively, both inter-ministerial as well as with donor partners (ESP, 2009), and 2) Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) which was first assumed in 2008. The PRS is a long-term agenda for transformation in Liberia which was agreed by domestic stakeholders and development partners including the World Bank and IMF. The PRS working paper is updated every 3 years with annual progress report (ESP, 2009).

Full implementation of the working plans named above could lift Liberia out of poverty and make the education sector solid and sustainable and importantly, improve girls' participation in education at all levels.

In continuation of my interview with the policy advisor, I asked him to explain to me some of their undertakings to enhance girls' education and he said:

We have revised and distributed new curriculum to schools in all the counties. In the new curriculum, mother-tongue is being introduced at the primary level from grade 1 to 6. We have also decentralized our activities here at the Ministry. We have set up County Education Boards in all the counties and introduced school grants to purchase educational materials. Also we have established a special Girls' Education Unit (GEU) within the Ministry (...) but our main problem is funding.

The policy advisor then gave me various documents upon my request to better inform me about the work of MOE. In reviewing the documents at my return to Oslo the following was noted:

MOE has 3 regulatory bodies for the implementation of education policies at the local level namely: National Education and Training Council (NETC), County Education and Training Council (CETC) and 3) Local School Management Council (LSMC) (MOE, 2011a). None of these councils were functional in Zwedru. This will be referred to in the discussion in chapter 6.

In summing up the activities of MOE according to the interviews with my MOE informants as well as the documents reviewed, some progress has been made in addressing challenges to girls' education and to the Education sector in general.

5.3 How are NGOs contributing to meet the educational needs of the female population?

This section addresses research question number 2; it presents the activities and views of NGOs in Zwedru as they are key actors in the education sector. The information herein is based on interviews in Zwedru. As part of the efforts to reconstruct education in Liberia many organizations are working in the Southeast of Liberia. Four key organizations in Zwedru are presented below with details of their various activities: IBIS (the main education partner), German Agro Action (GAA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Medica Mondiale.

5.3.1 Uddannelse Skaber Udvikling (IBIS)

IBIS is a Danish member-based development organization working at all levels to create equal access to education, influence policies and resources for the poor and marginalized people in Africa and Latin America. IBIS is operating in the Southeastern Region of Liberia (Zwedru included) and is concerned with education governance programs which include how resources are allocated as well as policy advocacy. IBIS's Liberia office became autonomous since 2005 with country director. IBIS works in Zwedru in partnership with other NGOs.

The slogan for the program in Liberia is "*education for change"*. IBIS runs many projects in Zwedru and its environs including Child and Youth Initiatives (CYI), Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), Youth Education Project - (EYE) similar to NRC's Youth Education Project (YEP), Alternative Basic Education and REFLECT (adult literacy program). The Adult Literacy Program is intended for girls who are *"left-out"* for various reasons including maturity, stigmatization, distraction and the like.

IBIS in collaboration with other institutions is also conducting recovery and re-integration teacher upgrading programs by supporting teacher upgrading at the Government of Liberia teacher training institutes of KRTTI, ZTI and WTTI in the Southeast of Liberia. Computer training for teachers as well as Gender-based pedagogy has been introduced in the teacher training programs. This forms part of IBIS's collaboration with the Government of Liberia on the national level. There are 110 teachers benefiting from the capacity building projects in model-schools in the Southeastern Region.

As part of child and youth initiatives IBIS is carrying on pilot projects to address a wide range of educational issues including the introduction of mother tongue education in pilot primary schools. Youths are involved in decision making processes when it comes to for example – choosing topics to be elaborated in the courses. IBIS is also carrying on quick impact programs where youths with special needs are been trained for four weeks in various life skills. For example barbing hair. The IBIS director said that "the beneficiaries receive tool kits at the end of the four weeks training along with some cash to start their own income generating activities", he did not reveal the amount. No statistics was provided for the IBIS quick impact programs.

The main things that IBIS is doing for the female population include capacity building of teachers and especially training them in gender sensitive pedagogy and other relevant skills. Also IBIS is involved in policy advocacy as well as governance and allocation of resources in the Southeastern region where Zwedru is located. IBIS also collaborates with other NGOs in various projects in the area like the GAA as explained below.

5.3.2 German Agro Action (GAA)

SGBV is prevalent in post-war Liberia, also, Zwedru is one of the areas in Liberia where food insecurity is a challenge (see chapter 2). The GAA Director said

"We are constructing primary school buildings, roads and latrines in this area. We are also doing experimental farming; planting vegetables such as tomatoes and the like. We also have this pilot project, locally constructed oven for baking. The locals are not farming (...) I look forward to improving and implementing this project; this will mean producing bread on a large scale to serve the community and beyond. This will provide jobs and food at the same time".

The GAA project is especially important for girls (boys too) because it will allow them to learn practical skills in baking and selling. The farming project is also useful as it allows the youths (boys and girls) to learn new skills in agriculture, this includes how to treat the soil to reap maximum benefit without causing harm to the environment. These projects will provide food as well as jobs for some of the girls who are plagued with unemployment. The skills learned from these projects could be further developed. The GAA director and I viewed the clay hand-made oven and it is to be used with fire wood.

5.3.3 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Youth unemployment was elaborated in chapter 2. In an interview with the NRC Director he said

The main activities of the NRC in the Zwedru area are centered on the refugees from La Cote d'Ivoire but we are also undertaking a project to support the educational efforts of the Government of Liberia and Civil Society Organization (CSOs) in building skills and addressing youth unemployment. We are soon starting a youth training project in Zwedru to train local youths in various areas of life skills.

The director further explained that Youth Education Pack (YEP) is implemented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with support from the NRC. The project aims to support/encourage CSOs in Nimba and Grand Gedeh that are building capacity of youth, with components of the YEP (skills training, numeracy & literacy and life skills training). On April 9th, 2013, the first CSO - YEP Steering Committee (SC) meeting took place with members from the two counties as well as relevant Government ministries and UNMIL and UNHCR and the way forward was decided.

I had the occasion to visit the PTP Refugee Camp, the program run by the NRC for the Ivorian Refugee Community, 2 kilometers outside of Zwedru during my field work. The NRC projects at the camp follow up all learners, the refugees from La Cote d'Ivoire who are benefiting from the NRC programs in various areas of skills training including carpentry, masonry, computer science, cooking and baking as well as child care services. Importantly, there were active day-care centers at the PTP and Dougee (another refugee camp) - YEP Centers and child care services were provided for children below the age of 3. Students with children younger than 3 years brought their small ones to the day care centers while they attend classes. This allowed the parents to be more focused and reduced their chances of boycotting classes or dropping out because of single motherhood. The cooking and baking trainees also produce food themselves as well as other trainees, reducing problems of food insecurity. These situations, *feeding* and *child care*, relate to vulnerable girls like those in my study who are indigenous and vulnerable learners. Vulnerable girls often drop-out and or are at risk of dropping out of education programs and this is why the NRC is running such a contextualized program.

5.3.4 Medica Mondale

SGBV is widespread in post-war Liberia and named as major challenge to girls' education by the MOE. Chapter 2 elaborated on the status of female education. A representative of Medica Mondiale said in an interview:

women who have experienced rape often suffer from severe trauma and can have physical and psychological consequences. Women in Liberia lack knowledge about their human rights.

Medica Mondiale therefore tackles sexual and gender based violence by applying a holistic approach. They seek to address both the physical, economic, educational, legal and social levels of SGBV in Liberia and work in collaboration with other NGOs and local organizations.

The main activities of Medica Mondiale are

   a) Rehabilitation for survivals of violence (counselling services)
   b) Reproductive health education
   c) Social and political empowerment
   d) Prevention and Protection Networks through community sensitization and mobilization
   e) Promotion of structural change (equal rights, protection and justice for women through advocacy at the national level)

To sum up the NGOs activities, all of them take on a holistic approach to education and unemployment based on the context. The various undertakings emphasize long-term approaches aimed at capacity-building and sustainability. These attributes are of particular relevance to girls' education.

5.4   What are returnee girls' challenges to access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru, and how are these challenges influenced by the wider community?

This section presents the findings generated from research question 3. Some of girls' challenges are directly related to schools while others are factors or challenges linked to the wider community. The questions which generated the below information were posed to students (boys

and girls), NGOs, principals, teachers as well as parents. The drop-out rate among secondary school girls is 40 % in Zwedru according to Josh, a school principal. His school enrollment statistics for 2012 was a total of 635 students in the morning section and 461 in the afternoon section. Boys accounted for 75 % of the students in the both sections. Another school enrolled 600 students in 2012, 400 boys and 200 girls. Both of the school administrators who provided these statistics said that girls' enrollment was declining and their dropout rate was increasing.

Themes elaborated in this section are: Language of instruction, Girls' role models, Sex education, Prevalence of SGBV, Early marriages, Single motherhood, Household chores, Age and shame, Stigmatization, Peer pressure and Survival sex. A synopsis of issues in the wider community which have connection to girls' access and retention is also provided. The findings presented below are part of the discussion in chapter 6.

5.4.1 Language of Instruction and Communication

English is the exclusive language of instruction in secondary schools in Zwedru, likewise the rest of Liberia. My informants in all of the categories revealed that limited knowledge of the English language is a challenge to students, teachers as well as parents as most of the residents of Zwedru do not use English as a language of communication in their day to day activities. Jake, a male student explains:

 There are several local dialects in Zwedru but we all understand each other. Most of our parents do not speak English so we use our local dialect when we leave school. My parents and the people in the community all speak Krahn and that is the language which is commonly used

One of the NGO informants however said:

Parents are just not interested in their children's education. They do not make any effort to help in any way. Girls basically have no dreams, no visions (…)

For the NGO respondent, parents' lack of involvement in school activities is due to lack of interest, this will be discussed in chapter 6.

Among the parents that I interviewed, two of them did not know much English and so I had to speak very slowly, using very simple words and repeating myself very often. I these two cases some of the questions in the interview guides were dropped.

For the girls the use of English as exclusive language in school poses huge challenge. Rose a female student explains:

The English is sometimes hard for us to understand because we speak Krahn at home and during the time we stayed across the border we were using French. Even here in Zwedru we still use French a lot because we have family and friends on the other side.

Rosa the female teacher explained that girls especially have problems following their lessons because of language problems which she related to family relationships and household activities.

5.4.2 Girls' Role Models

When I asked secondary school boys and girls about girls' challenges to access and retention, both boys and girls said that lack of role models was a challenge to girls' educational participation. The staffs at all of the four schools revealed similar opinions, likewise one NGO respondent. The informants were convinced that responsible role models could serve as trend setters for secondary school girls. Moreover, the presence of female teachers could reduce the scenes of SGBV. Some claimed that there were no female teachers in secondary schools in Zwedru. Both girls that I interviewed said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was a great source of inspiration to them, emphasizing her educational achievements. Jane, a 10th grade girl said:

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf inspires me, she is well educated and she encourages all girls to go to school. If I learn well I could become president one day too.

Rosa, a proud secondary school teacher mentioned her counseling of female students both in and outside of school.

I am the only female teacher in this school and I also work in the administration. In fact, I am the only female working at this level in Zwedru. I am happy to be here and help my younger sisters and brothers. I graduated from this institution myself some years back. We really need more female role models to encourage our girls. In addition to my normal work, I counsel students on both academic and social matters. I even counsel girls outside of school in the community through work with local women organizations. Teen age pregnancy is a problem in this school; most of our girls drop out because of that. While I like advising and being a role model to girls, it is very demanding and I wish to have more female teachers and even counselors in the school.

The informants seem convinced that female role models are needed in Zwedru, especially in schools to motivate girls' enrollment and completion of secondary school.

5.4.3 Sex Education

Sex education is an issue of relevance to girls' access and retention in school. One principal explained that MOE policy does not make any provision for sex education, noting that neither of the syllabuses that they are required to implement in the new curriculum stipulate sex education. He made specific reference to preventive measures against unwanted pregnancies, issues of hygiene and HIV /AIDS. He highlighted that the GEU does not make any specific provisions to target girls. Likewise staffs in the four schools shared similar views. No one in any of the four schools mentioned anything about ethics in connection with sexual practices and SGBV. According to Josh a school principal

There is no sex education to prepare girls for eventualities. There are no specific programs which target girls, they are treated the same, just as the boys. Girls are very vulnerable because of the experiences that they had during the war and even now, GBV is a problem here

Ethics or moral codes are significant to people's attitude towards SGBV and the overall manner in which students, boys and girls relate to one another.

5.4.4 Prevalence of SGBV

SGBV is widespread in post-war Liberia. This is also the case in Zwedru which is a city where there are more than five thousand peace-keeping troops, UNMIL, as well as timber companies which employ mostly men. One parent Matty, who is also a CSO representative had this to say in a furious voice:

"We work with issues of SGBV and other gender related areas. Our children are abused by UNMIL soldiers; under age children are being abused. UNMIL soldiers are the main perpetrators and they go unpunished. I see a lot of painful and disgusting things. Women and girls need to be empowered; for example build the capacity of girls through skills and provide materials for them to start work after the training and provide loans for them to make small businesses with reasonable back payment plans. There is no youth skills training center here; such projects will attract young girls and even women and get them off the streets."

Rose, a female student confirmed the last point by saying:

Some of my friends dropped from school because they can get quick money from the streets

Women and girls are the main victims of SGBV especially in Zwedru.

5.4.5 Early Marriages

Some girls are forced into early marriages by their parents for various reasons including financial difficulties. I present here the responses from the two female students. Rose said:

Some girls don't attend school because they get married at a young age and the husbands don't allow them to come to school.

Jane the other female student put it like this:

Girls' husbands command them not to go to school after they get married

The responses from the two girls highlight that some of girls' lack of participation in school are due to influences of the spouses.

5.4.6 Single Motherhood

Many girls have become single mothers at an early age, some are heads of households. Teen-age pregnancy is also prevalent and some pregnancies come about as products of rape. The GEU consultant told me that

Out of every three teen-age girls in Liberia, one has had a child. Liberia has the second highest rate of teen-age pregnancies in the world.

I asked the students themselves as well as GEU and NGO representatives about single motherhood, all of them underlined the close link between pregnancy and drop out.

As one NGO respondent said:

Many of the girls who enrolled in the different projects in Zwedru had babies and some were pregnant, they had to cater to their own needs and many dropped out

Jane, a female student confirmed this, adding

Many of my school mates are not in school any more, they dropped out mostly because of pregnancy. Girls are not allowed in school when they are pregnant. But it will be difficult even if the school was allowing them.

Boye a male student said

Pregnancy is the main reason why most girls drop out. And then with baby a girl cannot return to school because she is responsible for the child.

5.4.7 Household Chores

In traditional households in Zwedru, girls are expected to contribute to the family in many ways, families are mostly extended (see chapter 2). When I asked Jane to explain her typical daily activities she said:

I put water on the fire first thing when I wake up before I sweep the yard. Then I bath my two younger sisters and get them ready to go to school along with me. My mother gives us money to buy something to eat at school. We start classes at 8: 30 so we start walking soon because the distance is a bit far. After school I go directly to the market to help my mother to sell then she goes home to prepare food. I help my mother to pack the things from the market around 6.30 and then we go home. After eating I clean the dishes and take care of my younger sisters and then I study for about an hour before going to bed.

Jake, a male student described his typical day in the following way:

I sometimes help with things here and there at home when there is a need. But my main work is to cut grass in the yard.

Jake on another occasion explained his activities in specific seasons of the year in the following way:

I go to the gold creek (illicit gold mining) after school to hustle to help to take care of myself and my family. After we dig for weeks, then we wash the gravel. If you are lucky you can get some mineral and sell them. When I get home from the creek then I study before I go to bed.

Rose a female student said

I wash dishes and fetch water before I go to school. Then I cook when I return home from school and wash the dirty clothes. In the evening I sell roasted fish in town from around 6:30 in the evening until 10:00. My mother and I sell fish to keep the family going. My father died in the war.

In most families in Liberia, traditional gender roles are such that girls are expected to work in the home and boys often have less to do at home. This forms part of challenges that greatly hinder girls' schooling. According to my findings this is also the case in Zwedru.

5.4.8 Age and Shame

Numerous females in Liberia lack formal education (see chapter 2). Only few girls are attending secondary school in Zwedru, this is one additional reason for the limited number of female informants in this study. Most of the girls have moved on to different activities in their lives without completing secondary school.

Boye, a male student said that:

Some of the girls cannot cope with the lessons because they do not have the time to study. They have children and families who look up to them for support. They end up dropping most of the time because of the lessons.

Jane a female student said:

Many girls do not reach secondary school level because they do not have the foundation. During the war there were no schools.

Rosa, the only female secondary school teacher said:

We try to encourage girls to come to school but it is not easy. Our women organization always reaches out to girls but many of them say they will come and they never show up. Many girls have just given up. Some girls clandestinely enter higher classes and they cannot cope with the lesson. As the result such girls are ashamed and embarrassed and this makes things difficult for the girls themselves as well as teachers.

Age and shame are connected with lost education as well as with current challenges.

5.4.9 Stigmatization

Some girls and women are stigmatized because of their role and experiences in the war, some girls were armed combatants, some experienced rapes and other abuses (see chapter 2). The population of present Zwedru is comprised mainly of indigenous Liberians who are mostly former refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Memories of the war are very present in

the daily lives of the people. The general impression is that there are issues of mistrust and hatred which are related to certain experiences during the war, for instance killing of loved ones, rape, and so on. Jake, a male student said that:

Some girls are not coming to school because of their activities during the war. Some girls were raped and some were forced to marry to fighters. Some girls were also fighters in the war too.

Josh, a school principal explained that:

Some girls are stigmatized because they were raped during the war, sometimes rapes were carried out by whole gangs. Some girls were also forced into marriages or kept as sex slaves over a long period and bore children in those relationships. The women are left with the psychological scars of such abuses as well as children who were brought forth.

Women and girls are deeply affected by the war, both physically and on the inside. Some are struggling to cope with various traumatic effects of the war which have significant implications for their access and retention in school.

5.4.10 Peer Pressure

The overall finding generated from interviews is that most girls between 15 to 24 years are not attending schools in Zwedru. There were no strategies designed to keep girls in school or attract them to school in any particular way. Some of them who manage to enter school are often influenced by their peers, both in and out of school to quit school. Zwedru being a relatively small area, girls are often acquainted with one another. All of the four student informants said peer pressure was a challenge to girls' access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru.

Jake described the following when I asked him to tell me what exactly peer pressure meant:

Girls meet in places like the market or The Eighteen; a place where people go out in Zwedru. Some girls sell things on the side of the road like roasted fish and corn. Some bad friends encourage other girls to follow guys that they don't even know. That is peer pressure.

Jane, a female student said

Girls are mainly carried away by peer pressure. Some girls like things, expensive phones and clothes and so on. So they follow friends and go after those things.

Rose, another female student said:

I want to be a nurse so I have to work hard, no peer pressure will make me to leave school.

Zwedru is a relatively small community where the younger generation is in touch with one another. Peer pressure seems to have a close link to the below theme.

5.4.11 "Survival Sex"

Prostitution or "survival sex" as it was referred to in some of my interviews in Zwedru appears to be widespread in the area. UNMIL has a huge battalion in Zwedru, over 5000 men (see chapter 2). The parents who explained about survival sex to me were in total disapproval of girls' prostitution. One parent said

Girls have to fend for themselves which sometimes leads them into prostitution or survival sex. Some girls have children and those children need to eat and so on. Parents are very poor and nothing is happening, things are hard.

  Lee a school teacher said:

Parents are living in complete poverty; they have no voice over their own children. They cannot control their children's behaviors. Parents look up to children for support.

The issue that is at stake in Lee's response is loss of authority on the part of the parents.

Rosa, the female teacher said:

Some girls are just not serious; they go after material things like cell phones and other things

The two themes, peer pressure and survival sex are interrelated and financial constraints look like the bottom line for such practices.

The findings that were elaborated in this section are mainly related to girls themselves. The issues in the next section below contribute to and influence girls' challenges. The themes in both sections are interrelated.

5.4.12 Issues in the wider community inducing girls' challenges

Lack of Housing facilities to accommodate teachers is a problem in Zwedru where the civil war caused both human and infrastructure damages. Most of the returnees are financially handicapped and cannot afford to reconstruct and or renovate housing facilities. Absence of teachers on a regular basis is another challenge that my informants revealed. Teacher absenteeism might be especially negative for girls since they are already vulnerable in many ways. For instance girls have more distractions at home. Other issues in this section are non-availability of the County Board and NGO and MOE consultation with the locals.

Tom explained the following about housing and teachers:

There are no houses in the area to accommodate teachers; these are some of the reasons why teachers, especially trained teachers prefer to remain in Monrovia where they can teach in several schools at a time and earn more money.

One teacher, Roland told me

Teachers' salaries are low as compared to other professions in Liberia. This poses a huge challenge to the field of education in that most trained teachers prefer to seek better paying jobs in NGOs and other areas. In some instances, teachers retain their jobs but send substitutes who are often unqualified. This leaves the few available trained teachers over-worked and often unprepared.

According to Rose a female student

Sometimes when some teachers come they take us to work on their farms, this is not interesting at all but we just have to bear it. We have our own work at home; this is one of the things that I would like to change in my school.

An NGO informant said

Many teachers are not trained in the content areas; some come as substitute teachers while the real teachers take up other jobs in NGOs for better salaries. This contributes very much to brain-drain from the teaching field and can discourage students and parents about school.

Rose also said

Some students drop from school because of no teacher, no teacher all the time.

County Education Board could not be reached because they were not available. My informants said that the board was established by the Ministry of Education but was not functional at the moment. When I expressed my desire to speak with the County Education Board, one school principal said:

you talk about Board when we do not have funds to even print the curriculum?

Government and NGOs consulting with the locals was explained to me by Lee, a school teacher:

One of the issues here is that Government and NGOs do not consult with the locals; they just do what they think is best for the community. For example, there is a beautiful, modern school building a few kilometers away, that became a market place for some time and now it is completely abandoned and inhabited by animals. Some latrines in the community are not being used by the people because of where they are built and having men and women toilets in the same place. People are ashamed or feel unsafe to use them.

What is at stake in Lee's explanation is that girls' safety is at stake and this influences their participation in school. The findings in this last section are cross-cutting, lack of housing, teacher absenteeism and communication between NGOs and the public.

5.5   Summary of the Findings

MOE has introduced major reforms in the education sector; Education Reform Act, decentralization of the authority of MOE, Curriculum reform, Special Girls' Education Unit and the National Policy on Girls Education. However, MOE faces challenges with funding, human resource capacity as well as lack of infrastructure. The activities of the four NGOs working in the Zwedru as implementing partners; Uddannelse Skaber Udvikling (IBIS), German Agro Action (GAA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Medica Mondiale are wide ranging including capacity building programs such as teacher training and policy advocacy and governance, skills training for youth as well as environment and safety issues. The findings related to the third research question show that girls are confronted with a web of challenges in and out of school which limit their access to and retention in secondary school.

CHAPTER 6: Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings generated from Zwedru as well as reviews of relevant policy documents and other information and views from the Ministry of Education in Liberia. The discussions are fundamentally rooted in the international discourse on Education for All (EFA), which is the global catalyst of education, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), both have enshrined in them the subjects of gender equality, social justice and equity. The chapter endeavors to address the set objective of this study while responding to the research questions on basis of the theoretical and conceptual framework elaborated in chapter 3. This entails critical examination of the findings in relation to the following three research questions:

1) How is the Government of Liberia addressing the need to have an educated female population?

2) How are NGOs contributing to meet the educational needs of the female population?

3) What are returnee girls' challenges to access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru, and how are these reintegration challenges influenced by the wider community?

6.2 How is the Government of Liberia addressing the need to have an educated female population?

This section discusses the education policies of the Government of Liberia in relation to practices in the four schools in Zwedru. Discussions in the section are categorized as follow: 1) Education Reconstruction: Are the Policies and Practices Targeting the Girls? 2) Decentralization and the Local Schools, 3) Curriculum Reform, Textbooks and the Local Schools, 4) Multi-dimensional Challenges of Funding Education in Liberia and 5) Education to contest unemployment among women and girls.

6.2.1 Education Reconstruction: Are the Policies and Practices Targeting the Girls?

The data presented in chapter 5 revealed various challenges to girls' reintegration into secondary school in Zwedru. All of the education reforms; Education Act, decentralization, curriculum reform, the Girls Education Unit (GEU) and the Girls' Education Policy are clearly geared towards promoting *inclusion*, a situation that was lacking or at best limited in Liberia before the civil war (see chapter 2). Dimmock and Walker (2000) underline concerns about the effectiveness and appropriateness of decentralization and school-based management policies in some contexts, emphasizing the importance of societal culture. This correlates to the MOE's *devolution* of its authority and lack of fund for the implementation (see chapter 5). The findings reveal that there are no governmental programs that directly target girls. This undermines the statement of the Girls Education Policy which states that girls are the most vulnerable learners (see chapter 5). Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are making much effort to improve education in Liberia (see chapter 2) but their capacity is still weak. In writing about women and *agency*, Sen (1999) notes that the objective has expanded and women are taking on a more vigorous role in advocating for their rights (see chapter 3). This is reflected in one of the responses from a mother and CSO representative in Zwedru. She said that they as women organization in Zwedru work with issues of SGBV as well as advocacy for skills training for women and girls (see chapter 5). Relatedly, the only female staff working at the secondary level in Zwedru said that in addition to her normal work, she counsels girls in school as well as in the community (see chapter 5).

Concerning the new curriculum, the findings reveal that neither this new one makes provision for sex-education. Given the prevalence of SGBV in Liberia, it is also noticeable that only the NGO representatives and the representatives from MOE mentioned the issue of *ethics* and student friendly environment in schools (chapter 5). The value of introducing ethics in school cannot be overemphasized when it comes to girls' situation. Daoud records that gender equality is concerned with creating environments that will enhance the well-being of marginalized groups, women and girls included (Daoud, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) induce the notion of gender equity and justice, to ascertain the relevant conditions to ameliorate impartiality. Referring to Subrahmanian (2005), Holmarsdottir writes that equity

gains entail the meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of conditions under which women make choices (Subrahmanian, 2005; cited in Holmarsdottir et al. 2013). However, so far the policy implementation of the Ministry of Education towards targeting women and girls in education seems fragmented, and there is therefore a great need to do more to curtail girls' low rate of access and retention in secondary school. Lack of implementation mechanism appears to limit these reforms to mere rhetorical documents.

6.2.2 Decentralization and the Local Schools

This segment covers a more general issue in the new education reform. According to the data, outstanding education reforms within the Ministry of Education include the decentralization of the authority of MOE. As stated in the findings chapter, this has produced the County Education Boards in all the counties. The Board should receive and disburse school grants from the central office of the Ministry of Education for the purchase of school materials. But the findings from Zwedru reveal that the curriculaum received on CDs have not yet been printed in the schools due to lack of funds. Also, other instructional materials were completely requiring in all the schools. The *devolution* of the MOE authority correlates to policies of *inclusion.* Dimmock and Walker (2000) note that decentralization policies may yield higher participation of teachers and parents in schools. For instance, placing school leadership in the hands of the locals could support the inclusion of the community in education through the establishment of parent teacher association (PTAs) which might promote girls' access and retention. PTAs could also promote accountability in schools and contribute to efforts against SGBV in that there would be collaborations between school leadership and parents. However, the findings from Zwedru reveal that there were no PTAs in any of the schools.

Steiner-Khamsi (2004) asserts that there are levels in the field of education where globalization may penetrate a society; policy, leadership and management. This is in line with Breidlid (2013) statement on the "global architecture of education", which means that one-size-fits-all policies are disseminated across countries which are dissimilar in many ways. The decentralization policy in Liberia is clearly centered on inclusion according to the findings, but its weak implementation seems problematic. The findings reveal that the MOE in Liberia does not have the capacity to oversee the newly assumed decentralization policy. In Zwedru there seemed to be no functional County Education Board since no one could give me any information about this. Dimmock and

Walker (2000) argue that decentralization and school-based management may place more power in the hands of the school principal. In the case of the four Zwedru schools, the principal and the other staffs seemed to be managing the schools to the best of their abilities. However, they seem to be steering the affairs of the schools without much or any supervision from the Government and this might place too much responsibility into their hands. The decentralization policy requires mechanism for supervision and implementation and maybe also education for leadership.

Dimmock and Walker (2000) further note that decentralization policies may yield higher participation of teachers and parents in schools. This does not appear to be the case in the four schools in Zwedru. The findings reveal that parents face several challenges including lack of knowledge of the English language which was the language of instruction and also of communication in school. Local dialects are the main languages of communication used by majority of the parents according to the findings, suggesting that the chances for parents' participation in school matters are highly limited due to language barrier. Brock-Utne and Hopson (2006) argue that the use of foreign languages as exclusive languages of instruction and communication might be problematic at various levels. In terms of teachers' improved participation because of decentralization as noted by Dimmock and Walker (2000), the findings revealed that qualified teachers are limited in Zwedru and the few available ones have more than enough to do. This suggests that their improved participation under such circumstances could be far from reality. According to Serpell (2003) the reason for schooling in the first place is to acquire knowledge, and this can change an individual and even the wider society. This means that education provision should be centered on learning. This explains certain arguments for changes in educational practices and policies in events where these are considered to be less appropriate in a given cultural context (Darnell and Hoem, 1996). For example the decentralization policy mentioned earlier needs to be supported in order to achieve the intended objectives. In order to fully implement the decentralization policy, much will be required including qualified teachers with incentives in the schools at the local level. Qualified personnel in schools may contribute to girls' improved participation in schools in that teachers and parents possibly will be more dedicated.

Having elaborated on the decentralization policy and how it relates to girls' challenges and the local schools, the section below discusses curriculum reform and textbooks as these are also reforms which are implemented at the local level in Zwedru.

6.2.3 Curriculum Reform, Textbooks and the Local Schools

It was noted in chapter 2 that the education system in pre-war Liberia was a contributing factor to the civil war. According to the findings, the National Curriculum has been revised and distributed through CDs to secondary schools around the country in Liberia. The new subjects in the curriculum for secondary school include *Peace, Citizenship Education* and *Human Rights*. According to the GEU informant, the new subjects have been introduced in secondary schools through the UN peace-building mission and its Liberian configuration in support of the MOE. This can be linked to the objectives of the Girls' Education Policy which are grounded in the well-being of girls in Liberia today. Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) underscore that always curriculum reforms should take into account gender issues in cases where this has been overlooked or under stressed. In the case of Zwedru, the new curriculum is still on CDs and this suggests that it is thus far not being implemented in any of the four schools. Davis' (2010) framework reveals six possible relationships between education, conflict and peace. The underlying point is that education policies and practices should be designed to avoid exclusion (Davis, 2010 in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). While the reforms in the new curriculum are geared towards inclusion, the lack of implementation appears to contribute to exclusion. This can be linked to the responses of some interviewees who said "there are no programs which target girls" (see chapter 5). The main point is that secondary schools are owned and operated by the Government of Liberia where lack of funds is a major challenge for the implementation of policies. This will be further elaborated below.

As referred in the Strategic Roadmap (2013), a new history book of Liberia targeting secondary schools which includes gender issues is being written to complement the curriculum reform (see chapter 5). The Roadmap records that the former history textbooks had elements that promote polarization between groups in Liberia. Moreover, in these books women and girls were portrayed in only traditional gender roles, which was not fair because that is not a true representation of Liberian society today.

Despite the congratulatory efforts made by the MOE, my findings reveal that the situation of secondary school girls necessitates even more efforts. The main emphasis on gender issues is in the area of teacher training which is being implemented by NGOs. The findings from Zwedru reveal that SGBV is prevalent in the area (see chapter 5). Moreover, patriarchal norms remain a challenge to the education sector and especially girls' education (MOE, 2006b). Since the education system was a contributing factor to the war in 1989 (see chapter 2), the situation of previously disadvantaged groups as well as of girls' education need special focus today in the reconstruction process. This should be both in terms of policy as well as implementation strategies. Education is a basic service that every country is supposed to give to its citizens; it is a right, not a privilege (UNESCO, 2000). Education being an ongoing process, it should be designed in a way that makes it sustainable. Lack of implementation of core subjects such as *Peace, Citizenship Education* and *Human Rights* in Zwedru, a post-war context where SGBV and other forms of violence are prevalent can be seen as neglect as there seems unpretentious need for these basic virtues. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of secondary socialization which emphasize processes of learning at a later stage in people's lives may be parallel to the teaching of the core subjects above. For instance the subjects have enshrined in them respect for rule of law as well as other characteristics which are needed to change attitudes and behaviors in order to boost girls' access and retention in school. This can be linked to Gyekye's (1997) indication that culture is learned and education is a promising ground for influencing change.

Changing attitudes and behaviors through the implementation of three new subjects may possibly contribute to girls' overall development by improving their participation and completion of secondary school. This in turn could pave the way for their career expansion and subsequently, employment. This can be linked to Sen's (1999) capability approach which emphasizes *capabilities*, the idea that development should be seen as increasing *freedoms*. In Zwedru, tool to increase girls' *freedom* can be education because of its relevance in terms of empowerment and employment. Nieto and Bodo (2010) uphold that learning is at the heart of schooling; therefore, educational policies and practices should be centered on how they affect learning and place learners at the center of educational processes. Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where he introduces the concept of "pedagogy for freedom" stresses that education should be extended to all, including the poorest. Lack of coordination between the curriculum reform and the

implementation strategies show a relationship to exclusionary practice and this may lead to girls' limited participation in schools in Zwedru. For instance, lack of implementation of the new subjects, *Peace*, *citizenship education* and *Human rights* suggests that the youths are not informed about ethics and the rule of law as well as peaceful co-existence. This may also mean that the youths do not know how to relate to one another and especially girls and this could leave gap for issues of SGBV.

Having discussed curriculum, textbooks and the local schools in relation to girls' schooling, the section below will look at MOE's lack of funding and how it creeps into the local schools in Zwedru.

6.2.4 Multi-dimensional Challenges of Funding Education in Liberia

This section discusses MOE's lack of funding from various points of view. According to interviews with the MOE authority, their greatest problem is funding. UNESCO (2007) asserts that emphasis on governments is lowered, allowing donor agencies to contemplate giving non-government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) "equal" or perhaps more attention than government. However, the findings revealed that in the Liberian context, CSOs have limited capacity. According to the UNESCO (2000), education is a basic right that every country is supposed to provide for its citizens. *Aid* to Liberian education should therefore not be a replacement for the Government of Liberia's own spending on this basic service. The overall spending of the Government of Liberia on education reconstruction appears to be insufficient to address the cost involved in this undertaking (see chapter 2).

The lack of education funding revealed by the MOE authority in the findings chapter can be examined from various angles. On the one hand one, according to Chabal and Daloz, corruption in Africa is at once the most familiar and the least understood of issues (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; p. 93). As elaborated in chapters 2 Liberia has a history of lack of accountability and impunity for corruption. The findings revealed that the new local County Board in Zwedru receives funds for the purchase of instructional materials from the MOE. But my findings also revealed that there were no instructional materials in any of the schools to the extent that even the new curriculum on CDs were not printed because there were no funds. This suggests that money transfer between the MOE and the County Board was a difficult process in terms of accountability, indicating a need for improved accountability structures. Moyo's, (2009) book

Dead Aid contemplates new strategies for interventions in the developing world in terms of *aid* towards development. Moyo argues that donor funds should be accounted for otherwise it enriches a few and does not serve the purpose for which it is intended. MOE's financial incapacity leads to lack of implementation of policies in Zwedru, schools are left unsupervised and without basic facilities. This contributes to girls' lack of participation in school and indeed their c*apabilities* (Sen, 1999*)* are not enhanced in these circumstances. Bortu states that public supports to education in Liberia have been fragmented and disorganized, and much to the disadvantage of the majority of the indigenous Liberian people (Bortu, 2009), which is also evident in Zwedru.

The below section discusses unemployment among girls since education has the potential to improve girls' occupational opportunities.

6.2.5 Educating to Contest Unemployment among females

Unemployment among women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24 years is two times more than among their male counterparts. There are limited or no job opportunities for girls in Zwedru (see chapter 2). Moreover girls are described as the most vulnerable group of learners (see chapter 5). Considering the two survey reports presented in chapter 2 concerning unemployment in Liberia, it is noteworthy to mention that the Government of Liberia concludes that there are more unemployed females than unemployed males, even though their definition of employment includes care for family which are generally carried out by females but not accounted for in terms of direct income. In addition information from an NGO survey in Liberia shows that females are highly represented among people with little education compared to their male counterparts (see chapter 2). According to the Capability approach, improved education for girls could lead to better employment possibilities (Sen, 1999). Given the notions of *agency, equity and freedom* in terms of gender theories (Holmarsdottir, 2013, in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013) it might be reasonable to indicate that the high rate of unemployment among women corresponds to the lack of educational opportunities for females. The capability approach underlines the redistribution of resources and the political will for the pursuit of gender equality (Sen, 1999). A real political will to enhance gender equality will take into account *equity* as well as *freedom* issues and stimulate processes to make improvement. The Capability approach underlines the

right to education as a *capability*. It underscores that the planning and delivery of education should be grounded in the understanding of the capabilities of the beneficiaries. Capabilities entail people's freedom to achieve what they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). This might require specific arrangements of operational activities that are practical to achieve. According to the findings, many girls have become single mothers, some are over-aged while some are stigmatized. The Capability approach underlines that such challenges should be given credence in the planning and implementation of education programs. The findings revealed that girls are not targeted in any particular programs. As one school principal said, they are treated just the same way as the boys. It is universally established by education providers and enablers at both international and national levels that gender is of vital significance to education processes and the achievement of the goal of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MGGs) (Holmarsdottir 2013; in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). Girls' enrollment and completion of secondary school means that they would have acquired skills which could improve their chances of employment. This corresponds to the notion of *equity*; the meaningful redistribution of resources and opportunities and the transformation of conditions under which women make choices (Subrahmanian, 2005; cited in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013, p.15). This notion of equity gains concurs with the Capability approach (Sen, 1999). An educated female population relates to development in that women and girls will be able to sustain themselves and make meaningful contributions to the society.

Having discussed the various themes which emerged from the findings related to research question 1, the below section looks at the themes emerging from research question 2.

6.3   How are NGOs contributing to the educational needs of the female population?

This section discusses three themes which have emerged from the findings in relation to the activities of the 4 NGOs and their position as non-governmental organizations and collaborating partners in education reconstruction in Zwedru. The 4 NGOs working in Zwedru are IBIS, German Agro Action, Norwegian Refugee Council and Medica Mondiale. The following themes: 1) Policies and Practices for Change and Sustainability, 2) Skills Training as Empowerment and 3) Eradicating SGBV for Improved Girls' Education, have emerged from the findings on the activities of NGOs in Zwedru. The NGOs initiatives have entrenched in them the

values of human rights, gender equality and equity as well as empowerment. The NGOs various projects relate to ideologies of inclusion.

6.3.1Policies and Practices for Change and Sustainability

This sub-section looks at the activities of the NGOs in regards to change and sustainability. Given the history of education in Liberia and its role in the 14 years conflict endured by the country, education reconstruction is a huge task.

The slogan for IBIS's program in Liberia is "*education for change".* This involves policy advocacy, issues of governance, teacher training and teacher upgrading among others. These efforts seem to be addressing the educational dynamics which contributed to the civil war (see chapter 2). The former education system was grounded in *exclusionary policies* and *practices*. Moreover, male hegemony, culture of lack of accountability as well as SGBV are among the factors which contribute to girls' lack of participation in secondary school in Zwedru according to the findings in chapter 5. The NGOs therefore take on a holistic approach by working collaboratively to address these flaws. For instance, building the capacity of teachers and promoting good governance can be linked to pedagogical issues as well as gender challenges (see chapter 5). Nieto and Bodo (2010) assert that, learning is at the heart of schooling; therefore it is worthy that student learning be a major focus of education stakeholders. This shows a relationship to IBIS's capacity building projects for teachers in Zwedru. This also relates to Serpell's (2003) concept of the three itineraries of schooling; pedagogical, cultural and economic agendas of schooling. For instance qualified teachers will consider essential elements in their practices in school which can contribute to girls' enrollment and completion of secondary school.

IBIS's policy advocacy correlates to the NGOs collaboration with MOE to identify policies which correspond to the context of education in present Liberia. Capacity building through teacher training and in-service training of teachers in the Zwedru area can be linked to the capability approach (Sen, 1999) as well as Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of secondary socialization. The underlying ideas are that, secondary socialization will contribute to educators' learning of new attitudes and behaviors which will relate to issues of gender sensitivity, fairness and justice and the promotion of *freedom.* Such transformation relates to Gyekye's (1997) statement that development in African contexts should take root in African cultures. A typical

example of new approaches to education include the implementation of mother-tongue in pilot schools which is implemented by the NGOs. Even though this is at the primary level, it serves as a source of motivation for parents as well as students, especially girls since they are often distracted from school by many factors including language barrier. According to Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005, p. 27) denying a group of people the use of their indigenous language implies social and cultural subordination of the culture and people whose mother-tongue is rejected. Importantly, the inclusion of mother-tongue at the primary level will give that cohort of students a better basis for secondary school, which was a problem for all but most especially for the girls.

6.3.2 Skills Training as Empowerment

Offering skills training to youths as is being done by IBIS and NRC in Zwedru also links to capacity building and subsequent employment. The projects are centered on providing skills and training for youths to improve their occupational chances. NRC's practical skills for the youths correlate to the capability approach in that the project gives credence to the understanding of the beneficiaries' *capabilities* (see Sen, 1999). For instance masonry and carpentry are skills which are practical and realistic for people in Zwedru given the need for construction. The capability approach with its multi-dimensional characters can be applied to the NGO's intervention. A central perception of the capability approach is that *capabilities* should be evaluated and addressed in conformity to the given context. This can be explained as people's freedom to achieve what they have reason to value (see Sen, 1999). Given the difficult circumstances of girls in Zwedru, it is important to identify education that is realistic for them to achieve and apply in their lives. There is argument for a nuanced understanding of quality in education in conflict affected zones which takes into account the views of beneficiaries themselves (Kirk, 2007, in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). This corresponds to the findings in Zwedru where classes in the only school which offers skills training are overcrowded. With reference to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of social constructionism which underlines that realities and identities are socially constructed, girls' learning of skills can contribute to transformations in their lives. Sen's (1999) capability approach emphasizes *capabilities*; the things that are practical for an individual to achieve. This can be linked to the GAA pilot project in Zwedru where an oven for baking is locally constructed to produce food and at the same time provide employment for youths and especially the girls. Empowering the girls in Zwedru by giving them training and

skills which will allow them to earn a living relates to Sen's capability approach. The Capability approach links education provision with health- services, income as well as structures of trade and governance (see Sen, 1999). For instance, if a girl is financially independent she can make decisions in her own life concerning unwanted pregnancies as well as forced marriage. The findings revealed that single motherhood is widespread in Zwedru and this contributes to girls' lack of education.

6.3.3 Eradicating SGBV for Improved Girls' Education

SGBV prevalence in Zwedrew was revealed in the findings as a major contributing factor to girls' limited participation in school. NGOs line of attack on SGBV through education, awareness, trauma counseling, policy advocacy as well as legal proceedings can be understood through the lens of gender concepts such as gender equality and equity (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006) as well as socialization theories (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Gender equality in education is connected with practical gender needs which require specific attention in education, for example, social relations which have implications for girls' access to education (Holmarsdottir, 2013, in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013). SGBV in Zwedru affects girls in multiple ways and impede their participation in school. The notion of gender equality in education and equity are closely related; both underline justice and the relevant conditions to ameliorate impartiality (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). This concurs with Sen's (1999) capability approach which underlines social justice and fairness as well as the redistribution of resources. Quenching SGBV in Zwedru can be linked to empowering women and promoting social justice. Gyekye (1997) records that culture is learned and it is not static, and education can contribute to change in cultures. This can be linked to practices of SGBV; these are learned and quality education can bring transformation. The NGOs efforts to eradicate SGBV include policy advocacy, they collaborate with MOE and other relevant Government ministries and agencies at the national level to finds ways to solve the problem. At the local in the Zwedru area, the NGOs carry on awareness programs to educate the locals about SGBV, what exactly is meant by this concept. Also they set up support groups and engage the local leaders in the fight against SGBV, collaborate with local law enforcement authorities and work along with schools to design strategies against practices of SGBV. They especially engage as many men as possible, students, teachers as well as ordinary citizens in the effort to fight SGBV while encouraging girls to report

offenses and suspicions of possible offences. "Palava hut" meetings are one of the venues used by Medica Mondiale for engaging the local community in pertinent discussions.

6.4 What are returnee girls' challenges to access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru, and how are these reintegration challenges influenced by the wider community?

This section discusses the findings emerging from research question 3. The findings revealed that some of the girls' challenges in secondary schools in Zwedru are directly associated with the schools while others are factors in the lives of girls outside of the schools as well as general conditions in the community. The themes that emerged from the findings are interrelated and some of them seem to have stronger effects than others. The discussions are categorized as follow: Language of instruction and indigenous knowledge(s) in School, Lack of female teachers as role models in school, SGBV prevalence as challenge to girls' education, Early marriages and traditional gender roles, Single motherhood as challenge to girls and the community, Household chores as a challenge to girls' education, Age and shame: a challenge to girls' education, Stigmatization and girls' education, Peer pressure and girls' education and Survival sex as a challenge.

6.4.1 Language of Instruction and Indigenous Knowledge(s) in School

My findings revealed that English is the exclusive language of instruction in secondary schools in Zwedru and the language of communication in the education arena. The language situation poses challenge to all: teachers, students as well as parents. But then it seems to be stronger defy to girls. Breidlid and Breidlid record that the choices that girls make in traditional African societies are often based on the prospects that they have available to them (Breidlid and Breidlid, 2013 in Holmarsdottir et al., 2013, p. 103). Relatedly, Kevane notes that cultures and traditions including gender roles are passed on through the elderly in African cultures (Kevane, 2004). These ideas seem relevant to understanding girls' limited knowledge of English in Zwedru. The findings revealed that girls are more involved in household and family life, using their local language most of the time (see chapter 5). One NGO representative stated that "parents are just not interested in their children's education". Based on the above understanding of traditions and cultures, it appears that parents' limited participation in school activities can be related to

language barrier. One male student said that the local dialect is mostly used in the community in Zwedru. The language issue therefore relates to both in-school- as well as community challenge.

The capability approach emphasizes *right to education* and the *political will* that supports *gender equality*. The capability approach also underlines *social justice and fairness* and it is perturbed about domestic inequalities and discrimination within the labor market (Sen, 1999). In education, fairness can be linked to the issue of language of instruction. This relates to Zwedru where students are taught entirely in English which is not their mother tongue. According to N'gugi (1994) formal schooling in a foreign language has consequences in the way that one can lose his culture and feel alienated. Similarly, May (2012) equates language to culture, arguing that the use of mother tongue as language of instruction is a *human right*. Brock-Utne and Hopson (2006) hold parallel views noting that the use of foreign languages as exclusive languages of instruction in schools in parts of the global South need to be overturned. In his book *Orientalism*, Said argues that Western system promotes exclusion and "*Othering*" of other epistemologies or knowledge(s) (see Said, 2003). Relatedly, Breidlid promotes the inclusion of indigenous knowledges in education and other discourses in the global South. He records that Western knowledge alone is clearly unable to satisfactorily resolve current social, educational, economic and ecological challenges (Breidlid, 2013, p. 45). Also, Gyekye asserts that African culture should be the foundation of development in contemporary Africa, that modernization should follow Africa's cultural traditions whereby the resources of tradition should be bound to the contemporary aims, approaches, and procedures of development. He further argues that the traditional and the modern can be unified (Gyekye, 1997). This means that African cultures should be incorporated in relevant discourses in the global South. The ideas of Gyekye correlate to the philosophies of Said, N'gugi and Breidlid whose concepts underline that all epistemologies should be acknowledged and not *othered*. These scholars have anxiety about indigenous students' alienation due to language barrier in school as well as the down grading of other indigenous knowledge(s) (Said, 2003; N'gugi, 1994; Breidlid, 2013). It seems relevant then, to use the mother tongue as language of instruction in schools. In Zwedru, mother tongue is therefore being implemented in five pilot schools from grade 1 to 6 by IBIS, the main implementing partner. This relates to an improved language foundation in primary school, making it easier for students to transition to the secondary level. In the responses of the

informants in this study, they revealed that language barrier was responsible for some students' dropouts and a challenge for access and retention (see chapter 5). Nieto and Bodo (2010) emphasize that students should be at the core of learning. Similarly, Freire's (1970) book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emphasizes the concept of *Pedagogy for Freedom,* it especially makes reference to the inclusion of marginalized groups in education and this shows a relationship to girls in Zwedru whose mother tongue and everyday language is not English.

6.4.2 Lack of Female Teachers as Role Models in Schools

Teachers and NGO informants revealed that lack of female teachers as role models is a challenge to girls' enrollment and completion of secondary school in Zwedru. The respondents claimed that female teachers could serve as role models as they would be directly present in the schools. There was only one female teacher at the secondary level in all of the four schools that I visited in Zwedru. The problem of few female teachers is not unique to Zwedru. This is confirmed by Kirk who states in an Advocacy Brief that the presence of women in schools can have huge impact on girls' access and retention in school and make positive impact on their achievement. She records that studies have shown a positive impact from female teachers on girls' (and boys') achievement. Furthermore, she notes that female teachers may act as advocates for girls in terms of representing their perspectives and needs (Kirk, 2006). Girls' education is therefore required to address the problem of female role models adequately. This means that girls' education today will contribute to capacity building. In terms of female teachers, some girls could even develop interest in becoming teachers. According to Momsen, lack of female teachers as role models shows a relationship to traditional gender roles (Momsen, 2004). Berger and Luckmann contend that individuals from childhood throughout their lives learn from various experiences through primary and secondary socialization. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This can especially be linked to role models. This means that home, school and other social arenas that a girl experiences on a frequent basis can have influence on her development, attitudes and behaviors. This can be connected to Odora Hopper's statement that talking about gender requires trying to recognize how society made you what you turn out to be, how it shaped your behavior, your ambitions, and your attitude towards yourself

as well as towards society at large (Hoppers, 2002, cited in Holmarsdottir et al. 2013). The lack of female role models in Zwedru can therefore limit the chances of girls to partake in education, which is a problem that is both in the schools and related to the wider community.

6.4.3 SGBV Prevalence as Challenge to Girls' Education

My findings revealed that SGBV is a hindrance to girls' access and retention in secondary school in Zwedru. The various challenges of the secondary school system coupled with *gender roles* in Liberia, both historical and contemporary, appear to disfavor girls when it comes to access and retention in secondary school. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) socialization theories and the concept of *social constructivism* can be applied to understand how people can be re-socialized into various behaviors under certain circumstances. This point is integrated based on SGBV which has become more widespread in Liberia after the war. Many accounts of the Liberian war record that SGBV was applied by the warring factions as a weapon of war. These practices appear to now be a culture which is predominant in the aftermath of the conflict. The findings in this study reveal that UNMIL peace-keeping missions in Zwedru are among the SGBV offenders. This does not mean that practices of SGBV are limited to the peace keepers. Considering the ideas of socialization and re-socialization according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), it appears reasonable to say that quality education can contribute to the eradication of SGBV. The prevalence of SGBV is a phenomenon that could be addressed if it is approached with commitment. Serpell (2003) calls attention to the role that education can play in the lives of individuals through his 3 agendas of education: pedagogical, economic and cultural agendas. This means that educating both boys and girls show a relationship to improved behaviors and respect for human rights. Quite relatedly, Gyekye (1997) emphasizes that ways of life that are learned (cultures), are not static, like SGBV. The ideas of Paris (2004) seem relevant to this discussion when he states that *rule of law* should be prioritized in post-conflict contexts including Liberia. Paris advocates for *Institutionalization before Liberalization* (Paris, 2004). This means in the Liberian context that the existence of statutory laws and traditional laws side by side is problematic (see chapter 2). This can also be related to Sen's (1999) *capability approach* which underscores that some structures should be changed in order to promote *gender equality*.

6.4.4 Early Marriages and Traditional Gender Roles as Challenges

My findings revealed that early marriage is a challenge to girls schooling in Zwedru. This can be linked to Kevane's (2004) ideas where he makes reference to elders in African traditional societies as carriers of traditions. The inhabitants of Zwedru are indigenous Liberians (see chapter 2). Girls in traditional communities are trained to be mothers and care givers and therefore their education is often not prioritized. Gyekye records that culture encompasses every way of life, emphasizing that aspects of culture which are negative should be discontinued (Gyekye, 1997). The notions of gender equality and equity according to Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) can be applied to understand the issue of early marriages as challenge to girls' wholesome functioning in society and their education. Gender equality in education is associated with practical gender needs that require specific attention in education, for instance social relations which have implications for girls' education. Gender equality and equity in education are closely related; both underline justice and the relevant conditions to ameliorate impartiality (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Serpell (2003) asserts that schooling or formal education can have economic, cultural and pedagogic agendas. The economic itinerary of education can be linked to career expansion and subsequently, employment. The pedagogic agenda can be linked to learning, knowledge acquisition and wisdom while the cultural program is to transmit culture across generations (Serpell, 2003). While it is important to transmit culture, Gyekye asserts that negative aspects of culture should be discontinued (Gyekye, 1997). This is especially relevant for the issue of early marriages as it relates to girls' schooling. When such negative aspects of culture are removed, education can promote change which seems to be relevant for practices of early marriage and gender roles in Zwedru.

6.4.5 Single Motherhood as Challenge to Girls and the Community

The phenomenon of *single motherhood* has increased in Liberian society as a result of the civil war and its legacies. Many households are headed by single women who cater to large extended families (see chapter 2). Liberia is the country in the world with the second highest number of teen-age pregnancies as referred in chapter 5. Teen-age pregnancy and single-motherhood seem to relate closely. In Liberia, most teen-age pregnancies come outside of marriages as the persons involved are usually not prepared to go into legal commitments. Furthermore, some of these

pregnancies come as a result of rape and other sexual and gender based violence. Single mothers struggle from day to day to take care of basic needs of the family. Secondary school girls between the ages of 15 – 24 in Zwedru are exposed to this hurdle and this hampers their access and retention in school. In chapter 5 it was noted that dropout rate among secondary school girls in Zwedru is about 40% and many of my informants alluded this to various problems including single motherhood. This illuminates the complex roles that some young girls and women are confronted with which can be a significant impediment for their access and retention in school. Additionally, single motherhood has impact on the community in that it contributes to a cycle of financial difficulty. Sen's (1999) capability approach with its various characteristics can be applied to understand the issue of single motherhood in relation to girls' education and the community of Zwedru. The capability approach underscores social transformations that can alter the lives of *both* women and men. This includes political, social, structural, and educational transformations that will be beneficial to all humans regardless of gender (Sen, 1999). For instance, education can put strategies in place to control unwanted pregnancies and decrease single motherhood. A person's capability refers to the different arrangements of operational activities that are practical for her to achieve. Another important aspect of the capability approach is that it is multi-dimensional in the way that it associates education provision with health services, income, features of trade and governance (Sen, 1999). For example, with education a girl can make informed judgments about early marriage and family planning which can have impact on her own life and the wider society (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006). Girls' education is important in post-conflict and fragile contexts, as access to medical care likewise other resources might be scarce (Mundy and Peterson, 2011).

6.4.6 Household chores as challenge to girls' education

My findings revealed that household chores assigned to girls in Zwedru are a major challenge to their education. Kevane (2004) states that, even though all societies of the world are gendered, they may be so in different ways, as context is important to the discourse on gender and gender roles. According to Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) girls and women are deprived of a wide range of opportunities in traditional African settings due to patriarchal structures. This means that girls' education is not prioritized, which is the case in Zwedru. This situation concurs with

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) argument about social constructionism which underlines that reality is socially constructed. The underlying point here is that the situation of girls in their homes in Zwedru does not leave many chances for them to fully partake in education. Sen's (1999) capability approach advocates for political, social, economic and other transformations to improve the quality of life for all, women and men alike. The girls in Zwedru had to help their parents to sell in the market after school in order to contribute to the up keep of the family as well as sustain themselves in school. Education appears to be a source of change which can be connected to the discontinuation of negative aspects of culture. While it is important for girls to contribute to their households, it is also relevant for them to be educated in order to contribute in a more substantial way. Gyekye (1997) argues that negative aspects of culture should be discontinued. This means that girls' participation in their homes as well as in school can be organized in responsible ways in order to achieve better and sustainable results.

6.4.7 Age and Shame: a challenge to girls' education

My findings from informants in Zwedru show that age and shame is a challenge to girls' education which has influence on the lives of girls as well as on the community. Girls' age and shame is attributed to the war and its legacies. Aikman and Unterhalter (2006) note that conflicts affect boys and girls in different ways. The findings revealed that many girls drop out of school because they feel ashamed for being above the stipulated age for secondary school. While this also affects boys, girls have other distractions which make them especially vulnerable when it comes to age. This includes their activities at home and biological features. Also, many women and girls were in remote refugee camps and had little or no access to education (see chapter 2). Being older than the required age for school level has various effects on girls themselves as well as the classroom and school environment. The findings showed that over-age girls and women in many instances had already begun new ways of life. Therefore shame seems to relate not only to age but also to lost education. The capability approach (Sen, 1999) may be applied to understand issues of age and shame and lost education since the approach advocates for the transformation of political, social and economic structures (Sen, 1999). Associating the latter with Serpell's (2003) idea that education can bring about transformation, one can say that education should accommodate all, boys and girls alike, regardless of age. The concept of the capability approach

(Sen, 1999) as well as Serpell's notion about education can be related to creating possibilities to adopt various strategies to afford over-age girls a second chance to achieve their potentials. According to Aikman and Unterhalter analyses in gender and education include both quantitative and qualitative indicators, allowing for better understanding of the realities of school situations and factors which may influence schooling. Positively addressing such issues give a wider meaning to education (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2006).

6.4.8 Stigmatization as challenge to girls' education

My findings show that stigmatization is a condition which prohibits some girls from educational opportunities in Zwedru. The civil war and its legacies are numerous, multi-dimensional and cross-cutting. Women and girls are left with children who they may not know how to relate to because of the complex circumstances under which these children were born (see chapter 5). According to Treatment Centers.net (2014), an online source reporting health issues in post-war Liberia, a national representative study found that 44 % of Liberians, mostly women, show various signs consistent with physical and psychological scars from the war. Winthrop argues for a (…) nuanced understanding of quality education in post-conflict contexts, one that connects the multiple dimensions of quality by drawing on the insights of children themselves as to the value they place on learning (Winthrop, 2011, in Mundy and Peterson, 2011, p.123). This outlook underlines the importance of soliciting the views of the people who are to benefit from education directly. This appears to be important for conflict-affected Liberia where women and girls are tied up in a web of complex issues including stigmatization. Stigmatization appeared to be an unmentionable subject in Zwedru because the informant who spoke about it physically rechecked the door before he began speaking about the subject. Nonetheless, for instance girls who are stigmatized may have different needs than children in normal societies or their needs may even fluctuate in the same society. Given the robustness associated with the role that education is expected to play in rebuilding the lives of children and their societies after conflicts, it may be useful to listen to the voices of children themselves. For instance, the two female students in Zwedru expressed interests in becoming nurse and president respectively. Enshrined in the notion of nuanced understanding of quality in education is that education is multi-dimensional, and children themselves are in a good position to tell what works for them (Winthrop, 2011,

cited in Mundy and Peterson, 2011). This is reflected in the view of the Ministry of Education concerning the notion of quality in education, as stated in chapter 5. The MOE policy advisor emphasized that quality education should include adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers and staff with good salaries and incentives and importantly it should create employability. These aspects of MOE's view are especially important for stigmatized girls and women in Zwedru because they might have special needs.

6.4.9 Peer Pressure as challenge to girls' education

All of the students said that peer pressure was a challenge to girls' education in Zwedru. Peer pressure can be understood as social pressure from one's affiliates to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted (Dictionary.com). As stated in chapter 2, many people in Zwedru are financially handicapped. This may for instance give rise to some girls deciding to find other alternatives to schooling and this sometimes become an appealing situation to their peers as stated by the students in Zwedru. Berger and Luckmann note that secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society (Berger and Luckmann; 1966). Peer pressure can therefore be part of the secondary socialization in that young girls and women who have been socialized by their close entourage (primary socialization) seem to be re-socialized into new ways of life. However, one's own interests and values may shape the way a person responds to socialization processes as is the case with the two female informants (see chapter 5).

6.4.10 Survival sex as a challenge

According to the findings, teachers as well as parents said that many school age girls are involved in "survival sex" or prostitution in Zwedru, claiming that UNMIL peace keepers are among the offenders. In chapter 2, the economic circumstances in Zwedru were described as difficult (see chapter 2). Berger and Luckmann's notion of secondary socialization can be applied to understand the sexual practices of some girls in Zwedru. Secondary socialization inducts an already socialized person into new ways of life (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). However, Dimmock and Walker (2000) argue that culture is learned, not inherited, and it is not

static. Therefore culture can change over time and can be influenced by many factors including education. Taking into account Serpell's notion of the three agendas of schooling; pedagogical, economic and cultural agendas (Serpell, 2003), one can say that educating the girls in Zwedru fully might help to improve their sexual practices as education could provide them with occupational advantages. This can be linked to Gyekye's (1997) idea that aspects of a culture that are not good should be changed because culture is dynamic and ever changing. All of the informants who elaborated on survival sex were in total disagreement with the practice. With reference to UNESCO (2000), the limited attention given to girls in Zwedru could be interpreted as practice of exclusion or neglect which is undemocratic and falls short of the human rights of the girls. The condition of girls could influence various social issues including erosion in behavior, crime, as well as disenchantment. Unemployment and lack of opportunities contribute to a cycle of poverty which deepens the existent state of fragility in the country. The implications alluded to here are interwoven subjects which could contribute to various health threats including HIV and AIDS.

6.4.11 Conditions in the wider community influencing education

Teachers and a principal as well as NGO informants said that *teacher absenteeism* and *lack of housing facilities to host teachers* are challenges to education. Also, poor toilet facilities and the location of schools were named as challenges to girls' education (see chapter 5). Furthermore the *Pentecostal Church* and its views and practices also influence girls' education as will be elaborated below. Given the many distractions that influence girls' schooling (see chapter 5), these additional factors might make girls to be even more at risk of not enrolling at all or dropping from school. The lack of opportunities produces a significant number of females who are non-school attendants, dropouts or are at risk of dropping out of secondary school. Having a substantial population of unprepared young women and girls in Zwedru which is plagued by legacies of conflict can have various consequences for the girls themselves as well as the wider society. The situation of girls in Zwedru might send different kinds of messages. One of the female student informants said that teacher absenteeism demotivates girls and some of her friends dropped out of school because of that. Some of the teachers said that the lack of qualified teachers in Zwedru was due to lack of housing as well as potential teachers' attraction to better

paying jobs within NGOs. The capability approach is multi-dimensional and it can be applied to the situation of the teachers and schools in Zwedru. The capability approach underscores the definition of rights to education and the necessity of the political will that supports gender equality. Moreover the capability approach is fearful about domestic imbalances and discriminations within the labor market and the government. A sustainable labor market promotes development (Sen, 1999). For instance the conditions that distract teachers from working in Zwedru appear to be issues that should be taken into consideration in education planning. This concurs with Sen (1999) when he states that a sustainable labor market promotes development. Lack of qualified teachers clearly places more responsibility on the school principal and the few available teachers. According to Serpell (2003) education and the process of distribution include cultural, economic and pedagogical itineraries. This infers that education is vital to girls and women in Zwedru as well as the society at large. In the aftermath of a civil war, education is so desperately needed to replace the losses. The capability approach accentuates the political will to promote gender equality (Sen, 1999). Therefore it seems reasonable for the Ministry of Education and the Government of Liberia to find new ways to attract qualified teachers to Zwedru. This appears to relate to the political will underscored by the capability approach (see Sen, 1999).

The proliferation of *Pentecostal Churches* in Zwedru and their views and practices seem to have influence on girls' education. According to Heaner the Pentecostal Churches promote *"blanket amnesty";* unconditional forgiveness for hideous crimes. Also they have religious clarifications for people's attitudes and behaviors, both good and bad (Heaner, 2012). Women and girls are often committed members of these churches and this can be related to women's history of spirituality in Liberia (see chapter 2). The underlying point of this discussion is that women and girls often take the route of seeking religious clarifications for abuses including SGBV instead of seeking redress through the appropriate authorities. Heaner puts it that "the Pentecostal Churches are situating themselves as the most powerful interpreters of the realities of Liberian life" (Heaner, 2012). Similarly, the Strategic Roadmap (2013) refers that women and girls are stuck in effects of the war and are looking for closure to various problems through diverse sources. This has implications for girls' education because they live with traumatic experiences and spend considerable time going to church as compared to the period before the war.

6.5   Summary of Data Analysis and Discussion

The objective and research questions of this study were stated in chapter 1 and the findings spelled out in chapter 5. This chapter has dealt with analysis and discussions of the findings based on the theoretical framework in chapter 3 and background information given in chapter 2. The analysis and discussions can be summarized as follows. The education sector in Liberia has undertaken reforms like the education act, decentralization of the authority of MOE, new education laws and policies which includes the Girls Education Unit and the special Girls' Education Policy as well as the revision of the National Curriculum. The limited implementation of MOE policies contributes to low educational access as well as high dropout rate among females as compared to males in secondary schools in Zwedru, hence, these circumstances relate to unemployment among females. These challenges make the achievement of the global agenda of Education for All (EFA) not yet reachable in Liberia. In the discussions various circumstances relating to girls' education in Zwedru were explored and explained. The MOE is making efforts to promote inclusion in its policies and practices but the adequate implementation is skewed by lack of funding to oversee the process. The idea of decentralization in a post-war Liberian context makes the implementation of this policy difficult. In Zwedru, the curriculum was still on CDs and not in use in the schools. Sen's (1999) capability approach along with other relevant theories and concepts related to gender were applied in examining the education system and the challenges that girls face to reintegrate in schools in Zwedru. The capability approach is right-based as the other frameworks concerning gender in education such as WID, GAD and post-structuralism. But, according to Sen, in a more concrete mode than the others, the capability approach underscores rights to education and the necessity of the political will that supports gender equality (Sen, 1999). The discussions concluded that the Government of Liberia is making efforts but there is need for more to be done to improve girls' education, hence the goal of Education for All seems impossible to be met at the set deadline of 2015.

However, the international community through its four implementing partners in Zwedru, Uddannelse Skaber Udvikling (IBIS), German Agro Action (GAA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Medica Mondiale are working diligently and in various ways to improve education in the Southeast of Liberia where Zwedru is located. The work of these organizations include teacher training and teacher up-grading, advocacy and governance issues, capacity building to

improve gender sensitivity in education as well as providing child care among others. The implementations of these diverse strategies clearly relate to the inclusion framework and show a vibrant relationship to capacity building which promotes sustainability. One informant however said that the Government as well as NGOs do not sufficiently consult with the locals in taking decisions regarding where to carry on construction of schools and latrines. As such these are sometimes built in locations that make them unusable.

There are complex issues which influence girls' access to and retention in secondary school in Zwedru. Traditional gender roles as well as patriarchal norms are widespread in Zwedru as shown through early marriages of girls, heavy family duties and the like. The prevalence of SGBV is also a major hindrance to girls and women in Zwedru. The notions of gender equality and equity which have embedded in them human rights, the rights of the child and women's rights (see Aikman and Unterhalteer, 2006) are in their initial stages of implementation in Zwedru. Women and girls are taking on to various coping mechanisms including looking for closure through the Pentecostal Churches.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 General remarks

The intention of this thesis has been to answer the research questions while addressing the overall objective of the study which was to explore the process of education reconstruction in the post-conflict context of Liberia with special emphases on the reintegration of former refugee and internally displaced girls in secondary school in Zwedru. In order to achieve this objective I formulated three research questions which were presented and explored in the previous chapters. This chapter will present my concluding remarks based upon what was learnt from this study.

The researcher is of the opinion that the research questions were all addressed, some more exhaustively as compared to others. Useful understanding of education reconstruction processes in post-war Liberia and especially in the local context of Zwedru was generated. Also, girls' challenges to access and retention based on the perception of a limited number of girls though, but complemented by information from relevant stakeholders were engendered. Indeed at the

personal level, I have gained greater understanding of the connections between education and conflict-affected society.

While it is difficult to generalize, it can be said that what was found in Zwedru through this qualitative case study can be cautiously related to other parts of Liberia as there are many similarities between the conditions of girls in Zwedru and those in other parts of the country.

7.2 Potential ways to enhance girls' access to and retention in secondary school

The recommendations that I present below are based on the application of the theories and concepts which were employed in the study including capability approach, indigenous knowledge(s), sustainable education, human rights concepts, gender equality and gender equity, socialization theories as well as the notions of conflict and peace in relation to education provision. Alongside the theoretical framework the findings also serve as the basis for the suggestions below.

1) Enlightening radio programs as well as direct contact with girls in the community could be a possible technique to create awareness and promote girls' education in Zwedru.

2) Improving relations between NGOs and local school authorities could pave the way for combination of expertise and intercultural competencies which could be employed in various ways to stimulate girls' interest in education.

3) It might be useful to institute a culture of ownership among parents and guardians through the establishment of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or the like. The local language could be included in deliberations on various themes in such arenas.

4) It seems advantageous to engage civil society organizations (CSOs) in the process of motiving girls.

5) It could be necessary to incorporate girls and women by engaging them in working groups as partners through CSOs or school organizations, those who are in school as well as dropouts in the process of finding strategies to promote girls' education. This may help to maximize the available resources.

6) Engaging religious leaders especially from the Pentecostal Faith in dialogue, not confrontation could contribute to enhancing girls' motivation for school.

7) Including lessons on stigmatization, sex education as well as equality and equity in the curriculum could support girls' education.

8) Strategies addressing those not attending school could be developed through diverse inputs

9) Engaging traditional leaders in dialogue, not confrontation might improve various practices.

7.3 Some Possible Areas for Future Research

Given the agenda to achieve education for all while promoting the MDGs in conflict affected Liberia, future research in various areas using both the qualitative and quantitative paradigms will always be needed to inform policy decisions and improve practices. In light of this I wish to highlight the following areas as possible points of departure for future research as they appear to be blind spots according to what has been learned from this research.

o Negotiating the needs of women and girls in the education system: Merging the modern education sector and the traditional arena of socialization

o The role of traditional leaders in girls education in post-war Liberia: New Partnership in Education and Development

o An exploration of education funding in post-war Liberia: Enhancing transparency and accountability

o The role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in education reconstruction in post-war Liberia

7.4 Final comments

The overall objective of this study has been to explore the process of education reconstruction in the post-conflict context of Liberia with emphasis on the reintegration of returnee girls in secondary school. Females make up more than half of the population of present Liberia. Therefore, girls' full participation and completion of secondary school in Zwedru is important for achieving the goal of Education for All and the MDGs. Giving consideration to the issues that challenge girls' participation in education can contribute to sustainable peace and development. Girls in Zwedru face many challenges in accessing and completing the full course

of study in secondary schools due to many factors including policy issues as well as features in the society such as prevalence of SGBV and limited employment opportunities. Given the lessons learned from this study it might be safe to conclude that the Government of Liberia needs to find new ways to address the financial situation of its education sector so as to complement the efforts of its international partners. The full implementation of the Ministry of Education's new reforms could improve girls' access and retention in secondary school.

List of References

Aikman, S. & Unterhalter, E. (Eds.) (2006) *Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education.* Oxford: Oxfam

Allafrica.com: Retrieved 27.04.2014 from
http://allafrica.com/stories/201404250580.html?page=1

Arnot and Mac an Ghaill (2005). *The Routledge Falmer reader in gender and education* Routledge

Atkinson, P. and Hammersley, M. (2006). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (3rd edition) Routledge

Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* London, Penguin Books.

Biseth, H. (2008). *Multilingualism and Education for Democracy.* International Review of Education, 55(1)

Bortu, T. K. (2009). *Problems and Challenges Faced by Liberian Refugee Children and Youths as they enter formal Educational Systems at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana.* (Master Thesis) University of Oslo

Buseh, A. (2008). *Empowering Resilience: Improving Health Care Delivery in War-Impacted African Countries:* A Case Study of Liberia. University Press of America Inc.

Breidlid, A. (2013). *Education, Indigenous Knowledges, and Development in the Global South.* Contesting Knowledges for a Sustainable Future. New York. Routledge

Breidlid and Breidlid (2013). *Women in South Sudan: Education, Empowerment and Identity Construction* in Holmarsdottir et al. (2013) Rotterdam /Taipei: Sense Publishers

Burbules, N. C. & Torres, C. A. (2000). *Globalization and Education: Critical perspectives.* New York: Routledge

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research methods* 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carm, E. (2013*) Adult Basic Education and Learning* (ABEL) – an efficient tool for combating poverty? Lessons and indications from a case study from Lao P.D.R. HIO report no 9.

Carm, E. (2012). *The role of local leaders in cultural transformation and development.* Compare Vol 42, No 5, September 2012

Chabal, P. and Daloz, J.P. (1999). *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Oxford: James Curry.

Coleman, Marianne and Early, Peter (eds) (2005). *Leadership and Management in Education, Culture, Change and Context*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Cohen et al. (2000). *Research Methods in Education (5th edition).* London: Routledge Falmer.

Cohen et al. (2004). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge Falmer

Cresswell, J. (1997) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*: Sage Publications Inc. 2nd edition

Culture Orientations Resource Center USA (2010) Cornell University Law Library. Retrieved 05.02.14 from

http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/library/WhatWeHave/SpecialCollections/LiberianLaw/Customs.cfm

Davis, L. (2011). *Can Education Interrupt Fragility? Toward the Resilient Citizen and the Adaptable State* in Mundy and Peterson (2011) Teachers College, Colombia University: London and New York

Darnell, Frank and Hoëm (1996). *Taken to Extremes: education in the far north*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Darnell and Hoen (1996) *The quality of schools model of education reform: a description of staff focus.* ProQuest LLC

Daoud, S. (2013). *A Critical Review of Gender Equality in Education* in Holmarsdottir et al. (2013) Rotterdam /Taipei: Sense Publishers

Dillon, E.C. (2008) "*The Role of Education in the Rise and Fall of Americo-Liberians in Liberia, West Africa (1980)"*. (PhD dissertation) Georgia State University - Educational Policy Studies Dissertations. Paper 18. Retrieved from

http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=eps_diss

Dictionary.com: Free Online Dictionary
http://dictionary.reference.com/

Dimmock and Walker (1996). *Educational Leadership: Culture and Diversity*
    Sage Publications Ltd.

Dimmock et al. (2000). *Globalisation and Societal Culture: redefining schooling and school leadership in the twenty-first century*. Compare, vol. 30, No 3.

Dupuy, K. (2006) *The Challenges of Access: Reintegrating Repatriated Refugee and Returned Internally Displaced Children and Youth into the Formal School System in Sierra Leone*. (Master Thesis) University of Oslo

Duyvesteyn, I. (2004) *Clausewitz and African War: Politics and Strategy in Liberia and Somalia*: Taylor and Francis e-Library

Education sector analysis in Africa: limited national control and even less national ownership

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059399000280

Education Sector Plan (ESP) (2009) Government of Liberia . Retrieved 04.04.14 from

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/libhtml/liberia.html

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Flags Encyclopedia (2014) Retreived 15.06.14 from
http://global.britannica.com/search?query=liberia

Global Security (2005). Retrieved 15.03.14 from

 http://www.globalsecurity.org/

Gyekye, K. (1997). *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections and the African Experience.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hatoos and Huijser (2010). *Gendered barriers to educational opportunities: resettlement of Sudanese refugees in Australia.* Gender and Education

Hammersley and Atkinson (2006). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. New York, Tavistock Publications

Heaner, G. (2013) *Pentecostals and Transitional Justice in Liberia* (Ph.D dissertation). Retrieved from http://www.religionconflictpeace.org/volume-5-issue-1-and-2-fall-2011-spring-2012/pentecostals-and-transitional-justice-liberia

Holmarsdottir, H. (2013) *Moving Beyond the Numbers: What does gender equality really mean?* In Holmarsdottir et al (2013) Rotterdam /Taipei: Sense Publishers

IMF Assessment - Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Government of Liberia Retrieved: 27.04.14 from

http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr1245.pdf

INEE

http://www.ineesite.org/en/

Johnson, T.C. (2004) *Education and Social Change in Liberia: New Perspectives for the 21$^{s:t}$ Century* AuthorHouse USA

Kabeer, N. (2003). *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals*: Canada International Development Research Centre

Kevane, M. (2004). *Women and Development in Africa: How Gender Works* Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

King, E. (2011). *The Multiple Relationships Between Education and Conflict: Reflections of Rwandan Teachers and Students* in Mundy and Peterson (2011) Teachers College, Colombia University: London and New York

Kirk, J. (2007). *Education and Fragile States* in Mundy and Peterson (2011) Teachers College, Colombia University: London and New York

Kirk, J. (2006) The Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education: Retrieved 15.06.14 from

http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001459/145990e.pdf

Kirk, J. (2008a). *Addressing Gender Disparities in Education* in Mundy and Peterson (2011) Teachers College, Colombia University: London and New York

Klees, S., Samoff, J. & Stromquist, N. P. (Eds.) (2012) *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*: Sense

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2008). *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* Sage

Leach, F. (2003). *Practicing Gender Analysis in Education* (Oxfam Skills and Practice Series). Oxfam Publishing

Liberian History: A timeline, No date. Retrieved 02.02.14 from
Liberian History: A Timeline

Liberia Labor Survey (2010). Retrieved 15.02.14 from
http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/WCMS_156366/lang--en/index.htm

Lincoln and Guba (1985). *Naturalistic Analysis*
Sage focus editions: Sage Publications

Maxwell, D. (2006) *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism & the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*: Oxford, Harare and Athens, OH

May, S. (2001). (Ed.) *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language* Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education.

MOE: Ministry of Education (2011a), Final Report: National Policy Conference on Education and Training, Liberia

MOE: Ministry of Education (2006b), National Policy on Girls' Education, Liberia

MOE: Ministry of Education (2011c), Liberia Education Administrative Regulations, Liberia

Momsen, J.H. (2004) *Gender and Development. Routledge Perspectives on Development.* Routledge

Mongrue, Jesse (2010), *Liberia: America's Footprint in Africa: Making the Cultural, Social and Political Connections*, iUniverse books

Moyo, D. (2009) *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa* GB Penguin Books

Mundy and Peterson (2011). *Educating Children in zones of Conflict: An Overview and Introduction* in Mundy and Peterson (2011) Teachers College, Colombia University: London and New York

(NCSCL, 2013) National Civil Society Council of Liberia Retrieved 12.04.14 from http://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=fragile%20state%20definition http://unmil.unmissions.org/

Nieto, S. and Bode, P. (2010) *School reform and student learning: A multicultural perspective*. In: Banks and Banks (ed) Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives. 7th Edition. Wiley.

Ngugi, W.T. (1986). *Decolonizing the Mind*. London: James Curry.

Olukoju, A. (2006) *Cultures and Customs of Liberia*: Greenwood Press

Oxfam GB: (2012) EMMA Liberia Case Study forweb.pdf

An Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis Study: Liberia's Slow Onset Crisis

Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*: Cambridge University Press

Patten, A., & Kymlicka, W. (2003). *Introduction: Language rights and political theory: Context, issues and approaches.* In W. Kymlicka & A. Patten (Eds.), *Language rights and political theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods (3rd edition).* Thousand Oaks Calif.: Sage Publications.

Sawyer, A. (1992) *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge* Ics Press

Said, E. (1991). *Orientalism*. London, Penguin.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development As Freedom*: Anchor, Reprint edition

Selmah W. (2013) West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR) Retrieved 15.01.2014 from http://www.wadr.org/en/site/news_en/5905/LIBERIA-Making-peace-in-Zwedru.htm

Serpell, R. (1993). *The Significance of Schooling.* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Social Institutions & Gender Index. (SIGI) (2011). US Department of State Retrieved 01.06.14 from http://genderindex.org/country/liberia

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (ed.) (2004). *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending.* New York: Teachers College Press

Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: Towards A Reconciled, Peaceful, And Prosperous Liberia (2013) Retrieved 25.09.2013 from

http://www.lern.ushahidi.com/media/uploads/page/3/Reconciliation%20Roadmap%20Draft%20 3-W.pdf

Taylor, C. (1994). *The Politics of Recognition*. In C. Taylor & A. Gutmann (Eds.), Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition (pp. 25-73). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Telle, F. (2007). *A Life in Limbo: Education among Liberian Refugees in Ghana*: Master thesis: Oslo University College

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission: (2008; 2009), Final Report Monrovia, Liberia

http://trcofliberia.org/reports/final-report

Treatment Centers (2014) Retrieved from

http://www.treatmentcenters.net/trauma-ptsd/ptsd-in-liberia-lasting-years-after-war/

Turrent, V (2011) *Aid and Education in Fragile States* in Mundy and Peterson 2011 Teachers College, Columbia University: New York and London

Unterhalter, E. (2007). *Gender, Schooling, and Global Social Justice: Foundations and Futures of Education.* In P. Aggleton, D. Halpin & S. Power (Eds.) Routledge

UNESCO (2007). EFA Global Monitoring Report: Gender and Education for All. The Leap to
        Equality. Retrieved 02.10.13 from
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-

UNESCO (2000) – Education for sustainable development website. Retrieved 15.03.14 from
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-
URL_ID=27234&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

UNESCO (2010). EFA Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalized. Summary.   Retrieved
        15.05.14 from http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2010-marginalization/

UNESCO (2014) Retrieved 06.03.14 from

http://www.unicef.org/education/files/QualityEducation.PDF

UNHCR Liberia (2014) Retrieved 12.01.14 from

http://data.unhcr.org/liberia/country.php?id=119

UNMIL Liberia (2014) Retrieved 15.03.2014 from

http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmil/

Weissman, F. (2004). *In the Shadow of Just Wars: Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action*.

C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., London

West, L.E. (2012). *The Negro Experiment: Black Modernity and Liberia 1883-1910 (M*aster's

thesis)**.** Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Retrieved from

http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05082012-115854/unrestricted/West_LE_T_2012

Williams (2013) Liberia's education system "a mess" Retrieved 15.12.2013 from

http://allafrica.com/stories/201303181093.html

Women's Refugee Commission (2010) Retrieved 15.01.14 from

http://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/programs/youth/research-and-resources/275-dreams-deferred-educational-and-skills-building-needs-and-opportunities-for-youth-in-liberia

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd Ed.) Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing

Appendices

    1. **Interview guide – secondary school students (boys and girls)**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Grade/ class:

Do you live with your parent(s) / guardians?

Do you have a part-time job / after-school job or any source of income?

What is your opinion about schooling?

What is your opinion on educational opportunities / chances for girls and boys?

Would you like to study further after secondary school?

If yes; what career would you like to pursue?

Why do you wish to study this?

If no; why would you not like to study further after secondary school?

If perhaps you have other plans; what are you planning to do after secondary school?

Have any – or many – of your fellow female students dropped out of school?

In case so- do you know why?

How do girls experience the process of getting / entering secondary school?

What might be the reasons why some girls do not complete the full course of secondary school?

How would you describe your typical day; from the time you wake up until the time you go to sleep?

If you were to describe your ideal school; what would you like it to be?

What do you hope to get from those things that you desire to have in your school?

What are those things that you appreciate most about this school?

According to you, why are these aspects important?

If there was something in this school that you could change; what would that be?

Are there any factors / features in the community or society that could challenge your education?

Are there any cultural practices and traditions that could influence girls' education? (Give examples.)

As a female student, how would you say secondary education is modeling your life?

What do you imagine to gain / get from attending secondary school?

Are there any females (teachers and other staff) in your school / society that inspire you? What about them that inspires you? (Give examples…)

Do you have student representatives / leadership in your school? What work do they do?

2. Interview guide – MOE representatives

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Position:

Number of years of work in the field of education:

What is the MOE doing with regards to girls' education? Give examples

What are the challenges that you (MOE) face in your work? Give examples.

As you see it, what are the factors that challenge girls' access to education? Give examples

In your opinion, what are the factors that influence girls' drop-outs? Give examples

In your opinion, what are the issues that challenge girls' retention in school? Give examples

In your opinion, are there any policies that might challenge girls' education?

As you see it, if there were things you could change about schools in Liberian, what would they be?

In your opinion, are there any issues in the society that pose challenges to girls' education?

In your opinion, are there cultural practices and traditions that influence girls' education in Liberia?

Based on your experience in the education sector, how would you describe power relations between boys and girls in schools or in the society today?

As you see it, does girls' education have any implication(s) for peace-building in Liberia?

As you see it, how does girls' education influence the process of reconstruction in Liberia?

In your opinion, what should quality education include? Give examples?

As you see it, how well is the curriculum serving its intended purpose(s)?

In your opinion, how well are the text books serving the needs of the students?

As you see it, what would you say about learning material(s) in schools?

In your opinion, how would you describe a model teaching methodology that will enhance the potentials of all pupils?

3. Interview guide NGOs

Name:

Gender:

Position:

What kind of work is your organization doing? Give examples / elaborate.

Do you face any challenges in carrying out your program / your work? Give examples

In your opinion, what should quality education include? Give examples

As you see it, what would you say about learning material(s) in schools in Liberia?

As you see it, is the curriculum serving its intended purpose(s)?

In your opinion, how well are the text books serving the needs of the students?

In your opinion, are there any factors / dynamics in the school that might influence girls' access to school?

As you see it, are there any factors / dynamics in the school that might influence girls' retention in school?

As you see it, are there any cultural or traditional practices that could influence girls' education in Liberia?

In your opinion, does girls' education have a role to play in the reconstruction of Liberia?

In your opinion, does girls' education have a role to play in peace-building in the country?

As you see it, do boys and girls have the same educational opportunities in Liberia?

In your opinion, are there any elements / features in the society that may influence girls' education?

4. **Interview guide (parents /guardians)**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Should both boys and girls have equal educational opportunities? Why?

If your response is yes; please state reason(s)

If your response is no, please state reason(s):

What might be those things that challenge girls' access to education in post-conflict Liberia? (Give examples)

What might be those things that make girls to drop-out of school and not complete a full course of secondary education? (Give examples)

Are there any issues / factors in the society that challenge girls' education in Liberia? Give examples.

In your opinion, what do you expect your child to learn / or get out of attending secondary school? (Give examples)

As you see it, how should teachers / students relate to one another? (Give examples)

In your opinion, what should a model school environment look like? (Give examples)

In your opinion, what is the most important thing(s) you want your child to learn in school?

5. Interview guide (head teachers / teachers)

 In your opinion, what should quality education include? Give examples

As you see it, how well is the curriculum serving its intended purpose(s)?

In your opinion, how well are the text books serving the needs of the students?

In your opinion, are there any issues in the school that influence girls' access to school?

As you see it, are there any issues in the school that influence girls' retention in school?

In your opinion, what teaching method(s) will enhance the full potentials of all students? Give examples

How would you describe the power relations between boys and girls in the school?

Based on your experience, how are grievances between students handled? Give examples

As you see it, how do students and teachers relate to one another? Give examples

Based on your experience, what are students' reactions to rules in your school?

As you see it, to what extent are students' opinions / suggestions taken into account in decision making in schools? Give examples / elaborate

Do you have a student leadership / representation in your school? What do they do?

6. **Observation notes: Factors taken into account**

Observation notes were recorded in charts to keep tract of the various schools in this study in terms of the themes listed in the left corner. The other two columns were used to record the existence or non-existence of the different facilities.

Themes /Facilities	Procedures are Existent	No procedures existent
Power relations: boys & girls		
Safety measures		
Toilets		
Co-existence		
Hygiene / health		
Infrastructure		
Water & food		