

Addressing The Problem Of Drop – Out From The National Correspondence College In Zambia

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ABSTRACT

The study looked at a few selected provinces in Zambia in particular (Central, Copperbelt and Lusaka) National Correspondence College (NCC) drop - outs of 1990,1991,1992,1993 and 1994. It investigated the courses of dropping out from the NCC Distance Education Courses using the appended questionnaire. Research findings from other cultural contexts and this study were used to make recommendations on indicated measures to alleviate the problem of drop - out from the NCC secondary education programme.

The main courses of drop - out are student demotivation and irregularity in the NCC administration. The reason for these courses is lack of funds and resources. It is recommended that the Government give money to enable the college to purchase all the necessary requisites to enable the college to produce the lessons. This will enhance learning at the NCC. It was also strongly recommended that NCC get decentralized. It is hoped that this will be a solution to enhance effective communication between the students and the NCC (i.e. lecturers and tutors).

It was also recommended that the NCC staff should undertake further studies in distance education, to enable them to appreciate the role of distance education in Zambia.

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION:

The state of distance education in Zambia cannot be appreciated without at least briefly considering population, economy, employment, education, and national development aims. In the 27 years since independence in 1964 education has been seen as a key element in

the national development from a colonial territory to an independent, self - governing country.

Zambia, formerly Northern Rhodesia, is a landlocked, south - central African country bordered to the north by Congo D. R. and Tanzania, to the east by Malawi and Mozambique, to the south by Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia, and to the west by Angola.

About 35 percent of Zambia's population, which is estimated at 10 million, live in urban settings. The capital city of Zambia, Lusaka, is a sprawling city and has a population of over 1,000,000. The overall population in Zambia has been and still is, increasing at 3.7 percent per year. Life expectancy has increased from 36 years for both sexes in 1950 - 55 to 55

years for females and 52 years for males in 1988. Despite the increase in life expectancy, the population is youthful and over half is under 15 years of age. Females entering reproductive age far exceed those moving out, so the past and present pressure on education, health, food, employment and housing will continue to increase (Tate, 1991).

The pressures may be exacerbated by improved health and hygiene and as long as the average number of children that a Zambian woman is likely to bear in her lifetime remains at approximately 7.2 (Tate,1991:2). Zambia's external finances have deteriorated as a result of:

- falling copper prices over the past 20 years;
- increasing oil prices up to 1981;
- years of confrontation across the Zambezi as a front - line Southern African State and headquarters of the African National Congress;
- fast growing population;
- difficulties of reaching agreement about policies for dealing with the balance of payments problems; and
- high inflation rate

Zambia has set objectives and targets for national development in a series of National Development Plans but many of the policies and programmes, particularly during the period 1981 - 1987, could not be implemented. The net effect of this was a "general decline in real economic growth which together with a steadily increasing population, resulted in a corresponding decline in per capital incomes, worsening levels of poverty, and growing

socio - economic and regional disparities" (Tate, 1991:2).

Politics and Government:

Mills (1992:16) and Panter - Brick (1994: 231) both report that the presidential and general elections of 31 October, 1991 marked the demise of the Zambian one party state, a regime which had lasted for nineteen years. President Kaunda stepped down, having conceded defeat to Fredrick Chiluba's Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) (Mills, 1992:16).

Kaunda had ruled Zambia since independence from Britain in 1964, the longest reign of any African Head of State (P.16). It was under considerable domestic pressure that Kaunda agreed to revert to a multiparty system, which he had abandoned in 1973. His party, United National Independence Party (UNIP), was reduced to a mere 26 seats, compared with MMD's 150, in the National Assembly (Panter - Brick, 1994: 231).

The major problems facing opposition to UNIP's leadership included:

1. The government's initial reluctance to concede even the principle of pluralist democracy;
2. The fact that a state of emergency was in force;
3. The prevailing allegiance of the administration to the party in government;
4. Official control of the media; and
5. Unacceptability of constitutional proposals.

The interviewing of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and Government made it very difficult to run the Government Ministries. The party expenditure was met out of public revenue. The state and party structures were virtually indistinguishable. The heads of the armed forces and of the police were ex official high-ranking party members. The hereditary chiefs, who numbered more than 280 throughout the republic, were paid by the state. They were also expected to work hand - in - glove with the ruling party. Some of the more important chiefs had been co - opted to the party's central committee (Supreme Political Body) of UNIP (Panter - Brick, 1994:236)

Distance Education in Zambia before independence:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Distance education has notably become an important component of the national educational system in both developed and developing countries. In Zambia,

correspondence education was offered in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s by Commercial Correspondence Schools based in England, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. They charged very high fees and as a result, many Zambians could not afford to pay and subsequently were unable to continue with their studies. Moreover, "..... the type of education offered to the Zambian population was not related to and relevant to the local environment. This also contributed to a high dropout and failure rate." (NCC Advisory Committee Minutes, 1987).

Before Independence, there was not much effort made to increase schooling opportunities for the African children. The situation was described by Mwanakatwe and I quote:

"..... the real weakness of this education is not at the lower primary level but above. Until two or three years ago, the education pyramid tapered to the point of disappearance more sharply than in most African territories. In the last three years, the increase has come later than in many countries elsewhere in Africa.

Even the 1963 school system implied that of every 100 Africans who start primary school, 82 would reach the fourth year, 42 the sixth and 21 would complete their full - time primary course. Of the 21, only six would find places in secondary school, of them only three would enter a senior secondary form and only two would end up with school certificates." (Mwanakatwe, 1968:37) end of quote.

It was further noted that:

".....in 1963 there were only 110,200 living persons who had obtained six years of education in African schools. A total of 32,000 Africans had completed the full primary school course of 8 years, only 4,420 had passed the two year junior secondary course (Form II) and a mere 961 were known to have passed the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations (Form V)." (Mwanakatwe, 1968:37)

Distance education in Zambia after independence:

After Zambia became independent in 1964, the government had the responsibility of allowing citizens to take an active part in the running of the country. Therefore, efficient education and reliable, indigenous manpower had to be built up. Unfortunately, the indigenous population lacked sound education. "..... Zambia had only 1,200 Indigenous Zambians with full Secondary School Certificates in 1964, the number of Zambian graduates was pitifully small at the end of 1964, estimated at about one

hundred.” It was noted in the NCC Advisory Committee Minutes of 1987, that following the two reports made in 1963, one by the Australian Correspondence Expert, H.C. Sheath, and the other by UNESCO, that:

“..... both Northern and Southern Rhodesia Governments should consider as a matter of urgency the establishment within their Ministries of Education a Correspondence Teaching Division, initially to teach Secondary Courses from form I to form IV ultimately to University Entrance. This would be of immediate benefit to a maximum number of Africans with a minimum of expenditure.....”

(Daka, 1987:1)

In the same year, there was a third report by a UNESCO Planning Mission, which was appointed to assist in planning the future development of the educational system in Zambia. Among other things, the Mission recommended that:

- “(i) Because places were not available in the post Secondary Schools for all those qualified and desiring to enter them it was unlikely that the demand for secondary education would be satisfied for some time to come, and it was recommended that the Ministry of Education establish its own correspondence school as soon as possible.
- (ii) The school should be prepared to provide free correspondence education at any level of secondary education, beginning with form I, and as a priority it should provide its services to practicing teachers.”

(Daka, 1987:1)

The need, therefore, to employ correspondence education to alleviate the shortest of post - primary school places was identified, in this part of the world, more than three decades ago.

The above recommendations came during Zambia’s transition period when the people were taking over from colonial administration. The new political leaders reacted positively to the recommendations. In May 1964, five months before Independence, the Ministry of Education launched a pilot scheme of Correspondence Education with the objectives of:

- (1) Providing Junior Secondary School Courses (2) which would be educationally sound and (3) offered at affordable fees to all students (Kabwasa and Kaunda, 1973).

When the first courses were advertised, 1,597 enquiries were received out of which only 150 students were enrolled. Over 75 percent of those enrolled were from urban centers, and over 27 percent of the total were unemployed

(NCC, 21st Anniversary, 1985).

Decision to provide correspondence education:

The Zambian Government decided to provide correspondence education for the secondary school course through the Ministry of Education:

“In May 1964, with generous financial assistance of the Copper Mining Companies the Ministry of Education was able to start a pilot scheme in correspondence education. At first the scheme was based in Lusaka at the college of further education. When the course was advertised 1,597 enquiries were received from which 150 students were selected to do Junior Secondary School Education.” (Mwanakatwe, 1968:146)

National Correspondence College (NCC):

Mwanakatwe (1968) and Kabwasa and Kaunda (1973) explain that in 1965, the Correspondence Course Unit moved to Luanshya. Since its inception in 1964, it had expanded considerably. “... in 1966, 730 students were enrolled for Junior Secondary Course; in the same year a start was made on the writing of General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary level courses in selected subjects.” (Mwanakatwe, 1968:147)

The NCC 21st year report (1985) explains that:

“ Statistics of the first batch of students indicate that out of 150, only 41 were unemployed; 33 were from rural provinces; 41 were in the 26 to 30 age group and the rest were between 15 and 25 years old. Only 10 of the students were female and of this number 4 were married.

Today.... Enrolments in urban centers continue to dominate. Women are still a minority.” (21st year Report, 1985:3)

Direct Enrolled Students Programme:

Direct enrolled students study secondary courses on their own, with NCC by correspondence. They do not study in groups as the ‘Open Secondary Classes’ students do. They work at home independently. (21st year report, 1985:3)

In 1965 an attempt was made to combine correspondence instruction with short residential courses and to link the courses to radio broadcasts. The two residential courses were conducted in the first year and were attended by only a third of the students. Because they proved to be expensive for the students, the NCC residential courses were abandoned. It also proved very difficult to acquire permanent airtime on radio for the first eight years of the college life.

Today the students are studying without residential school and with minimum radio programmes (four hours per week of radio broadcast under 'Home study Magazine Radio Programme'.

Establishment Of Open Secondary School Classes Scheme:

The problem of matching educational provision with the rate of population growth is a tremendous phenomenon in most developing countries. In Zambia, the lack of formal institutional facilities is significant, taking into consideration the number of pupils selected from grade 7 to enter grade 8. For instance, in 1980 142,000 grade 7 leavers sat for secondary entry examinations (to go to grade 8). Of these, only 47,000 were selected and 94,500 were not selected (Mwanakatwe,1980:16). Each year less than 30 percent proceed to grade 8. This means that more than 70 percent of these pupils are left either to join the population of unemployed, or to find some form of training or temporary employment with the hope of continuing education at a later stage (tender age and lack of training are also limitations to obtaining employment). Therefore, the problem at hand, is the plight of school leavers who would soon be adults, with no skills for earning a living.

In view of the above problem, it is evident that Zambia is faced with a dilemma of increased demand for education by these young people, but as noted above, the economy cannot provide physical institutional facilities and teaching personnel. The 'open secondary classes' (OSC) scheme was established as an alternative, more cost effective, method of addressing this problem. As discussed above the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and an Australian Correspondence Education expert from the University of New England, were among those who recommended this scheme (Mulenga, 1987:4 - 5).

Prior to this scheme, there existed a school leavers' scheme of correspondence instruction. Students were enrolled at reduced fees throughout the country. They were required to study on their own following a paced study programme. However, many students could not keep up with the schedule. Consequently, the drop - out rate was very high and the first examination results were very poor. The scheme was abandoned in 1970 (Daka, 1987 & Paul, 1990).

In 1972 another attempt was made to extend correspondence instructions to primary school leavers. That year there were 73,859 pupils who completed a full primary school course, but there were only enough places to permit less than 21 percent to proceed to

Junior Secondary School. The limiting factors to expansion at this level, as mentioned earlier, were shortages of qualified teachers, lack of teachers' houses, and classrooms. Furthermore, there was an acute shortage of textbooks. Because of the failure of secondary schools to absorb primary school leavers, night schools were invaded by children, thus driving away working adults for whom the scheme was originally designed. It was against this background that a second attempt was made in 1972 by extending secondary education to primary school leavers by correspondence tuition. This scheme, under the name of 'open secondary classes' proved popular and has survived to this day. It has now been extended to GCE (General Certificate of Education) 'O' level subjects. More than sixteen thousand students study by this method with the National Correspondence College (Paul, 1990:14 - 97).

At present the college offers Junior Secondary School Courses and GCE (General Certificate of Education) 'O' level courses. The OSC programme, caters for students from all over the country.

Since its inception, the college has helped other African countries by allowing them to use its course materials free of charge on request. The poor economy in recent years, coupled with non - availability of materials, has retarded the growth of the college and in turn resulted in a lower rate of enrolment (Paul, 1990 & Daka, 1987).

The college changed its name, in 1976, from correspondence course unit to its present name "National Correspondence College" to reflect its contribution to the education of the out - of - school population (21st year report, 1985).

AIMS OF THE STUDY:

This study aims at identifying practical measures to address the problem of drop - out from the National Correspondence College in Zambia. In addressing this issue under discussion, the study will investigate:

- a. the literature of distance education;
- b. the drop - out rate among the students from the National Correspondence College in Zambia;
- c. previous studies;
- d. the major reasons for dropping out from these classes; and
- e. framework for alleviating the drop - out problem in this situation.

Limitations of the study:

While there are many areas in which the study has significance, there are some limitations which should be considered.

The study was set in the context of the one hundred and twenty sampled NCC students from three provinces of the Ministry of Education in Zambia. Although some of the conclusions might allow inferences to be drawn for the other six provinces and other school systems, some of the conclusions may apply only to three provinces of NCC students. Transferability of the findings to other centers and students, while likely in some cases, should not be assumed.

Although Zambia's literacy rate is more than 34 percent (Ndeke magazine, 1992), many people have problems with English language. It is no wonder that some respondents were unable to answer the questions properly. As we will see in the results later, many students admitted that they had difficulties with English language as a subject. This problem affected the results for this study.

It is the researcher who paid for postage of questionnaires. The postage is no longer free at the National Correspondence College. Therefore, the researcher had problems with distribution of questionnaires to three provinces (Copperbelt, Central and Lusaka).

Because of prohibitive distance between Australia and Zambia and my inability to access the information by internet, it was not possible to get all the necessary information. Hence, the shortcomings of the study.

SECTION TWO:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/POSITION:

INTRODUCTION:

Before any of the previously mentioned research questions in Section 1 can be answered, the nature of distance education must be defined. The theoretical side of distance education will be explored in this section as well as, distance education in developing countries.

Terms related to 'Distance Education':

Through the years, various terms have been applied to describe the system of offering courses to people who were not present at a particular place of learning. Keegan (1980: 13) identified six terms which appear frequently in the literature of the English - speaking world, these being:

- correspondence study;
- home study;
- independent study;
- external study;
- distance teaching; and
- distance education.
- In addition to these terms are:
- distance learning; and
- off - campus studies.

All the above terms are good; but they do not describe the system of offering courses to people who are not present at a particular place of learning. For instance, " A student is classified as external when the institution makes special arrangements whereby the student need not attend the institution for lectures, tutorials or other regular contact with a supervisor."

(Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, 1984:2)

As the student may be required to attend tutorials or study schools (although NCC does not provide these facilities any longer) the question becomes a matter of definition of the term 'regular'. Using an alternative term avoids this difficulty. Although no term is going to be able to perfectly encompass all the characteristics of the various systems used, the term ' distance education' would be suitable to use.

'Distance education' is the acceptable term used rather than the other concepts because:

1. It denotes a separation between the teacher and the learner. Although there may be contact by telephone, visits by staff to students or vice versa as at study schools, the teaching - learning process is basically done with a physical separation between the teacher and learner;
2. the term allows for teaching by a variety of means. This can include: teleconferencing, telephone, television, radio, video or cassette tapes, slides or computers (therefore not correspondence study);
3. it allows for guidance by the teacher. The learner is not limited to the materials with which he is provided, but can have two - way communication with the teacher throughout the learning process. The learner as well as the teacher can initiate the interaction equivalent to seminars, tutorials and individual consultations (therefore not simply distance teaching); and
4. it allows for learning at study centers or at the original institution. Such instances can be on an individual basis by the learner or in a group as a tutorial or an on - campus study school (therefore not off - campus studies, home study, independent study or distance learning).

Distance Education = Distance Teaching + Distance Learning (Keegan, 1980:32); but also the movement of staff off - campus to see students and the movement of students to study centers or on - campus to see staff and other students.

Definitions of distance education:

The term 'distance education':

"Covers all various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which nevertheless, benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of tutorial organisation" (Holmberg, 1977:9) in Keegan (1990:38).

Another educationalist, Peters (1973) quoted in Keegan (1990:37) says:

"It is rationalised by application of diversion of labour and organisational principles as well as the extensive use of technical media..... it is an industrialised form of teaching and learning."

The French Law (1977) quoted in Keegan (1988:6 - 31), "while recognising non - contiguity as an element differentiating distance education from conventional education, allows for the possibility of a teacher's being 'present on occasion or for selected tasks."

In Holmberg's (1977) definition, the dimension of the existence of a providing organisation is added to "distance" while in the latter definition by French Law (1977), a third element of distance education emerges and this is the possibility of occasional face - to - face sessions.

Moore (1973) quoted in Keegan (1988:6) acknowledges the non - contiguity of the teaching/learning process and the existence of communication between teacher and learner. He emphasises that communication can be offered by print, electronic, mechanical or other means.

Looking at these definitions, each contains one or more elements of distance education but none of them is complete itself.

Even what Keegan (1990:105 - 114) tried to put together from various definitions as characteristics of 'distance education' was rejected by many educationists.

Keegan states that:

- ❖ Distance education is an activity, which has the following
 - characteristics.
- ❖ Quasi - permanent separation of a teacher and a learner throughout the length of the teaching process;
- ❖ Quasi - permanent separation of a learner from a learning group throughout the length of the learning process;
- ❖ Participation in a bureaucratized form of education provision;
- ❖ Utilization of mechanical or electronic means of communication to carry the content of course; and
- ❖ Provision of means for two - way communication so that the learner
 - can benefit from or initiate dialogue." (Keegan, 1990:15)

Garrison and Shale (1990:25) assert that there are only three characteristics that should be recognised as essential characteristics of distance education:-

- ❖ The lack of contiguity between learners and teachers and learners
 - and peers;
- ❖ Provision of two - way communication; and
- ❖ The use of technology to mediate between learners and teachers." (Garrison et. Al., 1990:25)

From Keegan's (1990:105) proposed characteristics of distance education, Baath (1981:213) queries industrialisation as a general characteristic, since he believes that it does not apply to small institutions like Zambia's National Correspondence College.

The argument on the definition of 'distance education' can go on without coming to the conclusion. All concerned in this field will agree that there are two basic elements, which distinguish distance education from other forms of education. These two elements which can be considered essential are:

- Separation of teachers and learners; and
- The planning of an educational organisation. (Garrison et. Al., 1990: 25)

Source of theories:

From the definitions of distance education however, derive the theories of:

- Autonomy and independence;
- Industrialisation; and
- Interaction and communication

Theories of Autonomy and Independence:

The theories of autonomy and independence are common in many learners. They would like to be self - directed and to work on their own without much assistance from the teacher or tuition institution (Verduin and Clark, 1991). The theories also refer to the dependence/independence of the learner in relation to the teacher (Moore, 1988:85) as well as autonomy with regard to goal setting, choice of courses and pace of learning. On the other hand, some students find it very hard to work on their own. They need guidance throughout their studies. Hence the involvement of two - way communication. However, the choice of autonomy and independence in distance education is usually left to the student.

These theories are based on the concept of distance/separation of teacher and learner which also implies individualism of instruction and the need for dialogue, that is, two - way communication.

Industrialisation:

Peter's (1973) theory of industrialisation has some place in distance education, although some educationists have opposed this theory. The theory of industrialisation compares distance education with industry, with its large scale production of instructional materials, supplied to equally large numbers of clients; the use of technical media; the division of labour employed in the development of instructional materials; and the need

for rules and regulations to guide production, delivery and to ensure co - operation of all parties involved.

However, not all elements of Peter's (1973) theory may be found in practice. For instance, a small distance education institution like the Zambian National Correspondence College cannot indulge itself in mass production of lessons. It is government controlled and its interest is not making profits but serving the Zambian people. It is heavily subsidised by the state, although the subsidy does not meet the college's requirements. It is mainly targeted at rural population who are away from schools. The student's need a lot of interaction, especially those in the 'open secondary classes' (OSC) Centres. They are quite young and they need a lot of support and encouragement. As Knowles (1990) compared adults and juveniles. The young ones need a lot of assistance, guidance and support throughout their studies while most of the adults would like to work on their own because they are self - actualized and self - esteemed.

Theories of Interaction and Communication:

The theories of interaction and communication advocate effective delivery of the instructional message through well structured presentation, guided didactic conversation and feedback through assignments, letters, telephone and occasional face - to - face contact (Holmberg, 1988:115; Wangdahlk,1980:25).Interaction and communication is demonstrated at New England University where external students are allowed to meet their tutors/lecturers and fellow students through tutorials, teleconferencing and lectures.

This is said to foster feelings of closeness and alliance with the providing institution, thus helping to maintain motivation and promote success. In fact, Longlois (1994:10) confirms this, and says:

"Once or twice a year external students are required to attend residential schools. This compulsory requirement is the only time that external students will meet in person with their lecturers and fellow students. Coming to attend residential school is a good way of getting together and exchanging personal experiences. Says Dominique. It is also the only time I go to the Sports Union.' 'Staying in college is very enjoyable, I even like the food.' Says John, 65. 'It feels like being a young boy again'."(Longlois, 1994:10)

Although some students and educationists are not in favour of interaction and communication as indicated by Munro (1991:40), Sewart (1983:53) and Keegan (1993:18), communication and interaction contribute greatly to students' learning.

LITERATURE PERTAINING TO ADOPTING DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES:

The common problem noted by Siaciwena (1992:1;) Novotony (1992:1) and Brundtland (1988:14) is the inadequacy of educational opportunities for the indigenous people in the developing countries and the incapacity of the formal school system to meet the demand for education which have been the major factors in the adoption of distance education. Tate (1991:13) saw 'distance education' originally as a way of providing education for the predominantly rural indigenous population whose needs had been largely ignored prior to independence of most third world countries.

Tate (1991) emphasises that 'distance education'

- ❖ "Cuts across geographical barriers and so equalising education
- ❖ opportunities; and
- ❖ Provides instructions at all levels."

Brundtland (1988: 14) finds 'distance education' as the only solution to the third world problems. He says:

"In the next century the world's population will reach 1 billion. The challenge of providing education to such huge population is a formidable task. In many countries the present educational system can hardly keep up with population growth. Even primary education is not a right, enjoyed by everybody in today's world. At the same time, in other parts of the world, information is being sent around the world literally at the speed of light. We possess an abundance of knowledge on the one hand, but this knowledge is often concentrated in particular countries or institutions." (Brundtland, 1988:14)

Within the third world countries, the problems experienced are quite different, therefore, their objectives to achieve their educational goals are totally different. Daniel (1979:20 - 26) says, the objectives of 'distance education' vary from country to country.

As in Asia, some countries like Vietnam and Pakistan (pp.23 - 24) focus on the services training of workers, while in China the major objective of 'distance education' is to meet the needs of the development of the national economy and of society (p.22).

Thailand's objectives holds to the principle of life long education. It aims at improving the quality of life for the general public, seeks to increase the educational qualifications

of working people, and strives to expand educational opportunities for secondary school graduates in response to the needs of individuals and society (p.23).

In the Pacific Islands 'distance education' is needed due to lack of Universities. A number of islands depend on one University, the University of the South Pacific, and they use print as the main mode of instruction supplemented with satellite (p.24).

If to explain the need for 'distance education' is to go country by country it would take a long time to finish. Holmberg (1989:141 - 142) has summarized the special use of distance education in developing countries.

- ❖ In most developing countries, literacy programmes are needed for large numbers of people who, as children, had little or no formal schooling.
- ❖ The further training of men and women. Who are active as teachers of young people and who themselves have little, formal educational background is another field of activity that is typical of distance education in developing countries, where the need for teachers is usually much greater than the availability.
- ❖ Health education and family planning are other needs for which distance education is mainly applied to the training of supporting staff rather than those with poor health or too frequent pregnancies.

In the countries where 'technological media' are not used, it is very difficult to improve. The media cannot be improved if it does not exist. Through the use of various supporting media in 'distance education', other media can be introduced to enhance 'distance education'. Through proper technological media 'distance education' can penetrate and reach the most remote areas (as mentioned above).

Taylor (1986:171) confirms this:

".... In the last decade or so, distance education has made an increasingly extensive use of a wide range of instructional media including broadcast radio and television, audio tapes, video tapes, telephones and computers in conjunction with print materials."

'Distance education', therefore, is generally more useful to developing countries for offering education to the many rather than the few. The traditional methods of education, with a single teacher in a classroom, offer an inadequate solution to the educational problems of the world. Distance education can offer a better education to people who would not normally receive it. This is because of the economic case where large numbers of students are to be assisted (Ibid:171).

Michael Young and Company find distance education relevant to poor countries:-

"The rapid expansion of educational systems has been accompanied by rapid increases in the proportion of public expenditure devoted to education, while the acceptable percentage will vary from country to country, any proportion much over 2% begins to impinge upon the needs of other sectors and services and

limits further increases in educational expenditure to the rate of growth of GNP and public revenue." (Young et. al., 1980:viii - ix)

In order to cut down on educational expenses 'distance education' which is reasonably less expensive as long as students are enrolled in large numbers should be introduced in poor countries. It would help the poor countries to improve their economies. Distance education is for the majority of people who would live out their lives in a village and not for the minority who would make their way through ordinary schools to the town. Giving 'white collar' education to developing countries has created a big problem to political leaders who have tried to control urban drifts. People are not trained to find solutions to their local problems.

As said earlier on, 'distance education' can penetrate these areas and provide necessary education (Young et.al., 1980:ix - x).

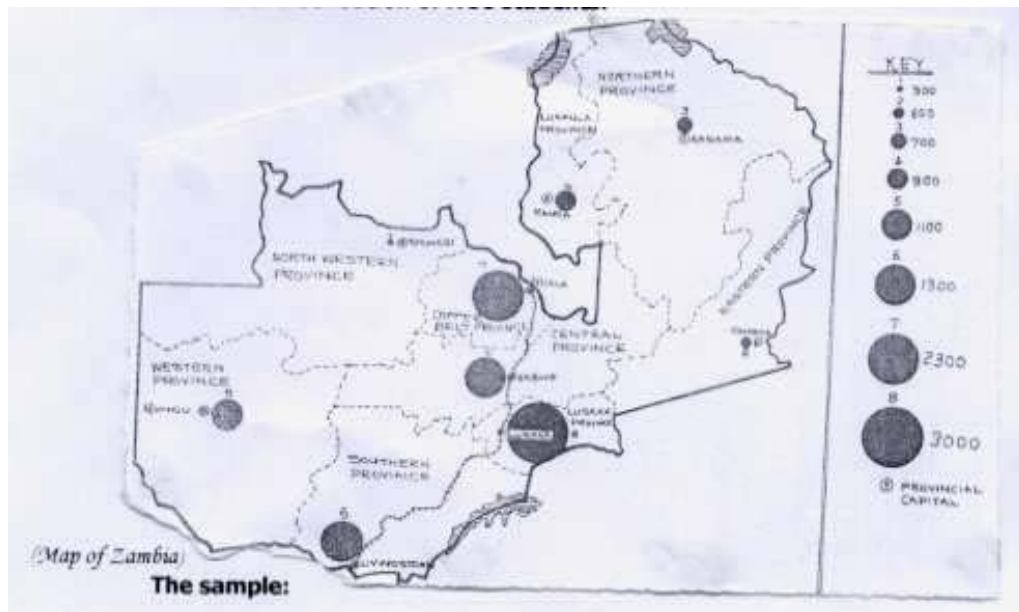
SECTION THREE:

METHODOLOGY - PLAN OF ATTACK AND SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

INTRODUCTION:

The information about the drop - outs at the National Correspondence College (NCC) was collected from three out of nine provinces of Zambia. Considering difficulties in postage and transportation, it was agreed that Lusaka, Copperbelt and Central should be the provinces sampled. The three provinces are very close to the college and the two assistant researchers were able to send easily and collect the questionnaires. The Provinces involved are shown in Figure 5.1.

Provincial distribution of NCC students:



(Map of Zambia)

The sample:

The population of the study was defined as students who stopped studying with NCC from 1980 to 1994. The population included students who had begun study but who had subsequently dropped out.

(details are given below).

Planning and random sampling:

The topic of the study is 'addressing the problem of drop - out' from the National Correspondence College in Zambia. This study used the survey research method. The students who dropped out from the NCC programme between 1980 and 1994 were the subject of study. Random sampling was used to avoid bias in choosing the participants. The intention was to collect similar information about each of the three provinces, under investigation through the questionnaire.

The Enrollment Statistics:

The National Correspondence College at the time of this study had approximately 49,000 students. This study involved a sample of 10,500 drop – outs (21.4 percent) in the three selected provinces.

Table 5.1

Province	Number of students
Copperbelt	2,065
Lusaka	5,849
Central	2,046
TOTAL	10,500

Number of drop-outs per province 1994

The actual enrollments in the three provinces namely: (Copperbelt, Lusaka and Central) were as follows:

Table 5.2

Province	Enrollment	Drop - out	Drop - out %
Copperbelt	5,020	2,415	48.1
Lusaka	9,250	3,401	36.8
Central	4,130	2,084	50.5
Total	19,400	7,900	40.7

Enrollment in the three provinces

Source: Annual Reports (1990,1991,1992 & 1993)

The three selected provinces:

Central Province is mainly a rural province with some commercial and subsistence farming. Commercial businesses are carried out in the capital of the province, Kabwe. Farmers from all over the province converge on this rural town to do their daily business. Apart from the Southern Province, Central Province is rated as the major agricultural province in Zambia.

The Copperbelt Province is the hub of Zambia and it has over three million people. Its main activity is copper mining. With two cities and six district towns closely linked, it is the most urbanized province in Southern Africa (Sibanda and Northcott, 1989:226).

Lusaka is a recently created province. It was made a ninth province of Zambia, mainly for administrative convenience. It houses the capital city of Zambia, Lusaka. Its population is growing very fast and the present population is over one million people. About 90 percent of its population is within the capital city. All major government administrative matters are carried out in Lusaka. Unlike Central Province, schools in the Copperbelt and Lusaka Provinces are closely linked.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

The questionnaire was drawn up at the University of New England with the assistance of my supervisor, Mr Barrie Brennan. The researcher had to use the questionnaire because it was acknowledged that a questionnaire was a reasonably and reliable method of obtaining factual information from respondents, as well as their opinions, feelings, and attitudes of people (Kerlinger, 1977;

Oppenheim,1966). In order to facilitate a richness and intensity of response; the questions were set in order to meet the requirements of the objectives of the study. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality. The covering letter on page 2 within the questionnaire informed respondents about the purpose of the survey and the use to be made of the results. It stressed deadlines. A name and contact address was also provided (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire).

Questionnaire started with easy questions and progressed to their experiences of enrollment and participation in the NCC programme.

OBTAINING THE DOCUMENTS:

Some files, registers, reports, study materials used for the NCC students between 1980 and 1994 were collected from the College. The activity of collecting the documents was done by the two assistant researchers. They collected the documents with the view that statistical information would be drawn from the records by the researcher at the University of New England. These were interpreted into graphs, charts, percentages, and helped to explain and compare the drop - out problem.

CARRYING OUT A SURVEY:

In order to achieve validity and reliability, the questionnaire was supposed to be pilot - tested on the researcher's behalf at Luanshya school for continuing education, in Zambia but it did not happen. As explained above, out of nine provinces with the population of about 49,000 active students throughout the country, only three provinces (Lusaka, Copperbelt and Central) with 10,500 were selected for the study as mentioned above. Each province had over 2,000 students studying with NCC. They were either direct - enrolled students or 'open secondary classes' students (students studying in groups) (Daka, 1987:4).

The distribution and return of the questionnaire was as follows:

(a) Central Province:

40 questionnaires were sent out.
20 questionnaires were returned.
50% response rate.

(b) Copperbelt Province:

40 questionnaires were sent out.
20 questionnaires were returned.
50% response rate.

(c) Lusaka Province:

40 questionnaires were sent out.
22 questionnaires were returned.
55% response rate.

From 10,500 (population) of drop - outs in 1994, 120 questionnaires (sample size) were sent. Although it was a 0.0114 percent of the sample size, it was random as indicated above. The questionnaires were posted to the selected drop - outs in three provinces. Questionnaire (see appendix 1.) were used to elicit the information from the NCC drop - outs between 1990 and 1994.

The survey method was considered appropriate for this study. The advantage of this method is that responses can be classified and analysed.

The questionnaire items focused on three themes:

- background;
- education; and
- termination of distance education studies.

All the above - named themes were structured in the way that they would provide data to assist in answering the research questions.

The respondents were further asked to:

- 1) give reasons for not attending the classes;
- 2) write down the difficulties which the students met in their lecture materials; and
- 3) list down the subjects which they liked and disliked.

The findings are used to discuss the reasons for dropping out. The relevant literature is used to make the discussions authentic. The tables in the next section show the results illustrating the findings. Some of the responses in the questionnaire were not useful. As a result, these unrelated results to the objectives were eliminated in order to avoid ambiguity.

SECTION FOUR

RESULTS

PRESENTATION OF DATA - THE RESULTS:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE:

The following tables provide information on those who responded to the questionnaire (Appendix I). All percentages are rounded out to one decimal point.

BACKGROUND:

Table 6.1

	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	Total	%
Female	08	04	12	24	39.3
Male	11	16	10	37	60.7
TOTAL	19	20	22	67	100

Respondents by Gender

Table 6.1 shows the enrolment of men (60.7 percent) and women (39.3 percent). However, the annual enrolment of women students at NCC is 20 percent against 80 percent for men (NCC Annual Report, 1977).

Table 6.2

Age Groups	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
14 - 20	10	09	08	27	45.8
21 - 35	08	06	11	25	42.4
36 - 45	01	05	01	07	11.9
Over 45	-	-	-	-	0
TOTAL	19	20	20	59	100

Respondents by age

Table 6.2 indicates 45.8 percent of sample between the ages 14 - 20, 42.4 percent between the ages 21-35, 11.9 percent between the ages 36 - 45 and 0 percent over 45 years of age. There were more responses in the early ages (14 - 35). However, the recommended ages for the 'Open Secondary Classes' (OSC) students should be between 14 and 18 (OSC Handbook, 1987:12). As for direct enrolled students, it is any age above 14.

Table 6.3

	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Married	06	07	04	17	27.9
Single	15	13	16	44	72.1
TOTAL	21	20	20	61	100

Marital status

Table 6.3 indicates that almost 3 in 4 of the respondents are single. This is the period when most people marry but respondents in this age group appear to drop out before they are married.

Table 6.4

	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
1982	-	01	01	02	3.3
1987	-	-	01	01	1.6
1988	02	-	-	02	3.3
1989	02	02	01	05	8.2
1990	07	10	04	21	34.4
1991	02	-	04	06	9.8
1992	05	02	04	11	18.0
1993	02	05	05	12	19.7
1994	-	-	01	01	1.6
	20	20	21	61	100

Enrollment period

Table 6.4 shows that the number of persons enrolled with NCC from 1990-1994 was close to 84 percent.

Table 6.5

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Number	11	09	09	29	47.5

Numbers of family members studied through NCC

Table 6.6

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Number	07	06	07	20	32.8

Family members completed studies

Almost half of respondents indicated that a family member had studied through NCC (Table 6.5). Almost a third of the sample (Table 6.6) had family members who had completed studies at NCC. Family associated with NCC appeared to be an important factor although it did not ensure against drop - out.

Education:

Table 6.7

Course	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Junior Secondary	13	12	09	34	56.8
Senior Secondary	06	08	12	26	43.3
	19	20	21	60	100

Programme enrolled in

Table 6.7 reveals that 56.8 percent of respondents registered in Junior Secondary and only 43.3 percent enrolled in Senior Secondary. As discussed earlier on, the mass drop - outs (pushovers) are at Grade 7. Therefore, a larger number of enrollments is expected at Junior Secondary rather than Senior Secondary as Table 6.7 shows.

Table 6.8

REASONS	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
To further education	11	08	13	32	54.2
To obtain certificate	09	09	08	26	44.1
Convenient for the job	-	01	-	01	1.7
	20	18	21	59	100

Enrolled in NCC subjects

In response to question 8, there were 13 different answers. After clustering three reasons were indicated. As expressed by Roberts, Boyton, Buete and Dawson (1991:64), "No one is likely to embark on a demanding distance education programme unless there are benefits."

Although there were diverse reasons for studying, most of the respondents enrolled with NCC in order to further their education and 44.1 percent enrolled to obtain a certificate.

Table 6.9

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Y	03	05	04	12	19.7
N	17	15	17	49	80.3
					100

Enrolled in distance education subjects/courses with another agency/provider

Y= Yes

N= No

According to the results obtained in Table 6.9, 80.3 percent confirmed that they had never studied with another agency/provider. And only 19.7 percent studied with other distant education institutions in other countries.

Table 6.10

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Y	11	08	11	30	50

N	09	12	09	30	50
					100

Studies interrupted for a period of time

Y= Yes

N= No

Table 6.10 indicates that half of the respondents had an interruption in their distance education studies.

Table 6.11

REASONS	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%	Group
Delay in sending the lessons	14	13	21	48	42.1	01
Lack of family support	11	16	16	43	37.7	02
Too expensive	05	02	02	09	7.9	03
Personal factors	02	02	04	08	7.0	04
Too hard	02	01	03	06	5.3	05
	34	34	46	114	100	

Reasons behind the interruptions

The responses to Question 6.11 gave 18 reasons for the interruption to NCC study. These were clustered in five groups. There were two major ones and three minor groups. Delay in sending the lessons (42.1 percent) and lack of family support (37.7 percent) were the major reasons behind the interruption.

Table 6.12

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
YES	10	11	08	29	51.8
NO	07	09	11	27	48.2
					100

Did any of the reasons in table 6.11 cause the students to stop studying?

N.B. Four did not respond.

Almost 52 percent of the respondents in (Table 6.12) said that they were interrupted in their studies. However, Table 6.11 did not necessarily result in the members stopping their NCC studies. Other reasons must have contributed for drop - out.

Table 6.13 Subjects in which they found problems

SUBJECTS (JUNIOR SECONDARY)	Central Province	Copperbelt Province	Lusaka Province	TOTAL	%	SETS
Book - keeping	03	-	-	03	3.3	X
Civics	01	05	04	10	10.9	XX
English	04	05	07	16	17.9	XX
Environmental Science	05	05	04	14	15.2	XX
Geography	06	06	01	13	14.1	XX
History	03	-	-	03	3.3	X
Mathematics	10	12	11	33	35.9	XXX
(SENIOR SECONDARY)					100	
Commerce	01	02	03	06	9.5	X
English	03	04	08	15	23.8	XXX
Geography	03	03	06	12	19.1	XXX
History	02	03	04	09	14.3	XX
Human Biology	04	03	02	09	14.3	XX
Mathematics	03	02	04	09	14.3	XX
Principles Accounts	02	01	-	03	4.8	X
					100	

Subjects in which they found problems

<i>Key</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>Very few problems</i>
	<i>XX</i>	<i>Few problems</i>
	<i>XXX</i>	<i>Too many problems</i>

Table 6.13 shows that all subjects created problems for some students. According to the respondents major difficulties were identified in Mathematics (35.9 percent), English (17.4 percent) and Environmental Science (15.2 percent) at Junior secondary. At Senior Secondary level, many respondents had problems in English (23.8 percent), Geography (19.1 percent), Mathematics (14.3 percent), Human Biology (14.3 percent) and History (14.3 percent).

Table 6.16

HOURS	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
1-5 hours	08	11	10	29	49.1
6 - 10 hours	09	05	07	21	35.6
10-20 hours	02	01	02	05	8.5
More	01	02	01	04	6.8
					100

Time spent on studying per week

Table 6.16 indicates that almost half of the students (49.1 percent) in this study spent between 1 and 5 hours per week studying, 35.6 percent spent of the students spent between 6-10 hours studying per week and 8.5 percent spent 10 - 20 hours respectively. 6.8 percent studied for more than 20 hours. 86.0 percent spent less than 1 ½ hours per day on their studies. The college recommends at least 15 hours per week or at least 2 hours per day for study (OSC Handbook, 1987:14 and Student Handbook, 1985:15 - 17).

Table 6:17

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
YES	14	16	12	42	67.7
NO	07	04	09	20	32.3
					100

Experienced problems while studying with NCC

Table 6.17 shows that over two - thirds of the respondents (67.7 percent) experienced problems while studying with NCC.

Table 6.18

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
YES	15	16	15	46	93.9
NO	01	01	01	03	6.1
					100

Asked for help

Table 6.18 indicates that 93.9 percent of the respondents asked for help. The vast majority recognised the need to seek help when studies became difficult.

Table 6.19

NAME	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Friend	13	11	11	35	22.0
School Teacher	11	10	11	67	42.1
Uncle	07	12	04	23	14.5
Father	07	07	03	17	10.7
Mother	02	04	02	08	5.0
Other	01	04	04	09	5.7
					100

Person asked for help

Table 6.19 lists the people who gave assistance to the students. Students sought assistance (42.1 percent) of the time most often from the school teacher. They also sought assistance from friends (22.0 percent) of the time, uncles (14.5 percent) of the time, father (10.7 percent) of the time and mother (5.0 percent) of the time. In Zambia students find it hard to ask for help from their parents and uncles, whom they treat with respect, because of their tradition which forbids them to be in close contact with each other.

Table 6.20

IMPORTANT THINGS LEARNT	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
To write and speak English	17	10	15	42	30.9
To do calculations and bank transactions	11	11	07	29	21.3
Civic duties of Zambia and other countries	10	06	11	27	19.9
Good behaviour and hygiene	08	07	12	27	19.9
To manage time and study independently	03	05	03	11	8.1
					100

The most important things learnt from the lessons

Table 6.20 indicates that 30.9 percent of the respondents learnt to write and speak English. 21.3 percent and 19.9 percent enjoyed learning calculations and bank transactions and hygiene respectively. 19.9 percent liked learning civics and 8.1 percent time management; twelve important things they learnt were clustered into five major points.

Table 6.21

THINGS NOT LIKED	Central Province	Copperbelt Province	Lusaka Province	TOTAL	%
Difficult English words in the notes	11	02	14	27	38.6
Outdated notes	03	04	05	11	15.7
No reference in the notes	03	04	04	11	15.7
Working out sums	04	03	01	08	11.4
Discouraging Tutor's comments	01	01	03	05	7.1
Missing pages from the lessons	02	01	01	04	5.7
Lack of examples	02	01	01	04	5.7
					100

Things not liked from the lessons

Table 6.21 shows a wide variety of concerns expressed by respondents - for instance 38.6 percent met difficult words in their text. 15.7 percent disliked outdated notes and 15.7 percent discovered no references in their notes.

It is clearly indicated in Table 6.21 that 11.4 percent did not like working out sums, 7.1 percent hated discouraging comments from the tutors, 5.7 percent did not like lessons with missing pages and 5.7 percent needed examples in their text.

Table 6.22

YEAR STOPPED STUDYING WITH NCC	Central Province	Copperbelt Province	Lusaka Province	TOTAL	%
1983	-	-	01	01	1.9
1985	-	01	-	01	1.9

1987	-	01	-	01	1.9
1989	02	01	01	04	7.6
1990	02	03	01	06	11.3
1991	02	03	02	07	13.2
1992	06	04	04	14	26.4
1993	04	03	05	12	22.6
1994	02	01	04	07	13.2
					100

Terminating studies

It is noted in Table 6.22 that 26.4 percent terminated their studies in 1992. The largest number of drop - outs in this study. These students enrolled between 1990 and 1993 as Table 6.22 shows above.

Table 6.23

YEAR	No. of lessons	Central Province	Copperbelt Province	Lusaka Province	TOTALS	%
01	1-7	02	06	09	17	15.7
	8-14	01	03	03	07	6.5
	15-21	06	06	07	19	17.6
	22-28	01	02	01	04	3.7
02	1-7	02	01	05	08	7.4
	8-14	04	06	02	12	11.1
	15-21	03	05	02	10	9.3
	22-28	02	-	03	05	4.6
03	1-7	04	01	01	06	5.6
	8-14	06	05	06	17	15.7
	15-21	-	03	-	03	2.8
	22-28	-	-	-	-	-
						100

Number of lessons completed before stopping the studies

It appears in Table 6.23 that students dropped out throughout the year. However, the lessons were not dispatched to them in the correct order. For instance, some received the 8th lesson instead of the 1st one, resulting in them dropping out from the course.

Table 6.24

Province	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
YES	14	17	20	51	91.0

NO	03	01	01	05	8.9
					100

Intend to study through NCC again

In spite of the interruptions and problems with subjects, as indicated in Table 6.13 and Table 6.17. Table 6.24 shows that over nine - tenths (91.1 percent) of those who had dropped out of their NCC studies surprisingly said that they were planning to resume studies in future.

Table 6.25

CHANGES AT NCC	Central Provinces	Copperbelt Province	Lusaka Province	TOTAL	%
Supplying the lesson to students	12	07	15	34	26.0
Decentralising NCC in the districts and provinces	07	09	06	22	16.8
Updating the lessons	04	09	09	22	16.8
Improving turn around of worksheets	08	05	05	18	13.7
Training tutors and lecturers in distance education	06	03	02	11	8.4
Reintroducing free postage	05	02	03	10	7.6
NCC syllabus to match with conventional one	05	02	03	10	7.6
Abolishing fees	01	02	01	04	3.1
					100

Things to change at NCC

From the eighteen suggestions for improvement of the NCC, eight groups were formulated 26.0 percent of the drop - outs of this study would like lessons to be supplied on time and sent in the right order to them. 16.8 percent suggested decentralizing NCC in the districts and provinces of Zambia. 16.8 percent responded that there is need for lessons to be updated, 13.7 percent want 'turn around' of worksheets to be improved. 7.6 percent would like to see NCC staff trained in distance education (Table 6.25).

Table 6.26

REMARKS	Central	Copperbelt	Lusaka	TOTAL	%
Decentralising NCC throughout Zambia	15	14	11	40	34.8
Improving postal services	10	05	05	20	17.4
Provision of face to face tuition and textbooks	04	08	07	19	16.5
Lecturers and tutors at NCC to be trained in distance education	02	06	06	14	12.2
Updating the lessons	05	03	03	11	9.6
Zambian Government to fund NCC sufficiently	03	02	06	11	9.6
					100

Further remarks

The results in Table 6.26 show that 34.8 percent strongly feel that the college should be decentralised. 17.4 percent would like to see free postal services reintroduced. 16.5 percent need provision of face to face tuition and free textbooks. 12.2 percent feel that NCC lecturers need training in distance education methods. 9.6 percent have repeated the already echoed sentiments of updating the lessons and funding the institution adequately. The above were made from fourteen recommendations.

SECTION FIVE:

DATA DISCUSSION:

INTRODUCTION:

The discussion is divided into five areas. These were introduced as a basis for discussing the relevant literature on the aspects of the drop - out problem.

These areas are:

- a) The demographic factors;
- b) The lack of social interaction;
- c) The language problem;
- d) The lack of motivation; and
- e) The organisational and management problems

This section, discusses the data presented in section four. References are also made to sections two and four, where the relevant literature on distance education and drop - out has been presented. Tables in section four have provided detailed information of this discussion.

The demographic factors:

There are four demographic sets of data. These are:

- a) Gender
- b) Age
- c) Marital status and
- d) Family support

(a) Gender

Table 6.1 indicates that most of the respondents who enrolled with NCC programme were men (60.7%) and 39.3 percent were women. Tinto (1975) noted that in most studies, males were likely to enroll than females. In his study Tinto noted that ideally the future study should cover the whole country in order to provide national results.

(b) Age:

As shown in Table 6.2 most of the respondents were young and under thirty five (35) years old. The students in this age group, as indicated in table 6.2 have other responsibilities that were of great importance than their studies. The respondents stated

that the purpose of enrolling at NCC was for 'further education' (Table 6.8), the reason stated was not accepted by parents as significant and important.

(c) Marital status:

In Table 6.3, it is indicated that most of the respondents in the study were single. The results suggest that marriage and study may not exist well together. Literature review (section two) indicated that women drop out mainly for non - academic reasons (e.g. marriage) while most men drop out for academic reasons.

(d) Family support:

The study indicated that family support, or lack of support, appeared to be important for drop - out (Tables 6.5 and 6.6). However, the survey showed that having family members at NCC or those who had completed NCC studies was not a guarantee that respondents would not drop out. This was in contrast with what Tinto (1975) noted (section two) literature review; that drop - out decreases as the students' parents, friends etc. show greater interest. Family support cannot be equated with family experience of NCC, whether successful or not.

Conclusion

In this study, it was established that there was a relationship between gender, age, marital status and lack of family support for students to drop out from their NCC programme. Most of these respondents were single young men who lacked support in their NCC studies.

Social interaction:

It was indicated in this survey that 93.9 percent of the respondents drop – out (see Table 6.18) when studies became difficult. Although Tinto (1975) encouraged parents and relatives to assist the distant learners as explained in literature review (section two), the respondents in this study found friends and teachers (see Table 6.19) to be more appropriate. The NCC drop - outs responded that they avoid consulting their parents and relatives due to their tradition which forbid them to be in close contact.

Moore (1973) in literature review (section two) and Moore (1975) in literature review (section two) emphasize the need of a teacher to assist the distant learner. The respondents in this study (see Table 6.19) also agree that help of a friend or teacher is important and at the 'door steps' close to the learner. Since NCC distant learners are

more comfortable with oral communication than written materials, the availability of the mentors would encourage them to study. Therefore, interaction with teacher, other students and helper would be very important in Zambia because it would provide two-way communication as explained in literature review (section 2). Lack of interaction as indicated in (section four), Table 6.19 forces students to ask for help elsewhere, and there may not be persons who can be of real assistance to them.

Conclusion:

There is a relationship between the perceived lack of people to help NCC students and the students' tendency to drop out from their NCC programme. The NCC respondents require assistance in their NCC studies from people within reach (e.g. friends and teachers).

The language problem:

The data in Table 6.13 indicated that the respondents had problems in all the subjects. English was the subject rated second highest for causing problems in the Junior secondary subjects and Senior secondary subjects. English is in addition the means of communication to and from National Correspondence College and has impeded their progress in other subjects (section four). The evidence is given in Table 6.21 where respondents indicated that they did not like "difficult English words in the notes" (38.6%). In spite of this, Table 6.21 showed that they learnt how to write and speak English (30.9%), because it is a compulsory subject at all levels of education in Zambia - literature review (section two).

However, to alleviate the problem of English difficulties, McCaul (1992:119) in the literature review (section two) has suggested that information be collected on the experiences and characteristics of the distant learners with English difficulties before they drop out from distance education institutions. This would help to attend to their problems. Or more attention could be given to English instruction before they enroll, or have the booklets (lessons) written in simpler English as indicated in the literature (section two)

Conclusion:

In Table 6.21 of the study 38.6 percent of the respondents claimed that progress in their NCC studies was impeded because of difficulties in English, the problem of English as a means of communication affect a much larger percentage of students nationwide.

The lack of motivation:

It was remarkable to note from this study (see Table 6.24) that 91.1 percent of the respondents although they had dropped - out, still wanted to study with NCC in the future. Despite dropping out, they learnt specific and general things from the NCC subjects as indicated in Table 6.20. The specific things they learnt were writing and speaking English and doing calculations and bank transactions. The general things learnt were civic duties of Zambia and other countries, good behaviour and hygiene and to manage time and study independently.

However, the study indicates that they experienced interruptions (see Table 6.10) in their work, which demotivated them in their study as shown in Table 6.11. They also lacked time to spend on their work (see Table 6.16). How could they be expected to keep up and keep motivated when they were only spending an average of less than 1 hour per day studying (see Table 6.16) when the NCC recommends 15 hours per week of study?

(OSC Handbook, 1987:14; Student Handbook, 1985:15 - 17).

As Table 6.23 indicates, the number of lessons completed before stopping the studies occurred at different times. Therefore, students dropped out throughout the year, unlike the suggestion at the beginning of the year, see literature review (section two)

According to Table 6.8, the study showed that the respondents enrolled at NCC for general reasons. They wanted to compensate for not completing their schooling. Others enrolled in the NCC because there was no other means of joining formal education.

The data from the survey indicate that there is a need for NCC students to maintain their motivation to gain "further education" (Table 6.8). To have a person, for instance, who has completed the studies through NCC and has been successful would motivate others to study. Messers Abbey Amos Mboyonga and Adrian L. Bauleni could become models. Mr Abby Amos Mboyonga of Luanshya, after successful completion of form II in 1966 at NCC, was promoted as an Inspector of Police. Mr Adrian L.Bauleni, after successful completion of the General Certificate of Education (GCE), gained entry to the University of Zambia. He obtained a B.A. degree in History and Political Science. This enabled him to do a Post - graduate Diploma in Educational Administration and Management at Moray House College in Edinburgh, Scotland. He is now a Personnel and Training Manager for Zambia National Building Society. The two mentioned successful stories would motivate NCC students to study once published in the NCC magazine or Student Handbook.

Conclusion:

The respondents still need to study in spite of the problems which they faced throughout their studies. They want to be motivated by people who have studied through the same system. This motivation could be through regular encouragement by relatives or friends. It could also be through telling them successful stories of people who studied through NCC. For example the above two successful stories of Messrs Mboyonga and Bauleni.

The organisational and management problems:

The organisational and management problems refer to people working for NCC (administrators, tutors, etc.); or people providing services which are essential features of the response link between NCC and its students (such as Post Office Workers); or physical materials (such as lessons, text books, worksheets etc.); or correspondence tuition, which involves communication flow between individuals regarding the curriculum and other study - related concerns.

The study (see Table 6.21) noted that the above mentioned organisational and managerial tasks were not adequately fulfilled. There were administrative problems in running NCC programmes. For instance, the lessons sent to the students were outdated (15.7%), the NCC students had discouraging comments from the tutors (7.1%) and some lessons sent to students had missing pages (5.7%). As the literature (section two) has suggested, these problems could be improved if the resources were made available at NCC.

The study (see Table 6.25) indicated areas that required changes to reduce the drop - out problem. These areas clearly related to the administrative features of distance education.

Conclusion:

The study suggested that there was an urgent need at NCC to improve the availability of resources and quality of communications between tutors and students in order to lessen the drop - out problem.

Summary of data:

According to this study, it is quite clear that the process of student's dropping out of the NCC programme was complex, resulting from an interaction of many factors. As

indicated in section four, it has been found that many factors are responsible for student drop - out, and the present study as indicated in section five tends to show the same interaction of reasons. The drop - out rate of the NCC students remains high and there is a constant need to check it.

SECTION SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

INTRODUCTION:

The discussion will begin with the conclusions and end with recommendations. The conclusions will give a brief account of the study while the recommendations will highlight the major findings and ways in which the problems noted can be addressed.

Summary and conclusion:

This study has revealed that there is a relationship between student demotivation and problems in the administration of distance education at the NCC. The ultimate result has been that some of the students did not complete their courses and dropped out.

Section one of this study presented the background information which led to some of the problems revealed in section five. It explained the education system in Zambia since Independence in 1964. The economic problems were detailed and were discussed in this study to have contributed to the deterioration in the resources for the NCC programme.

In addition to the 'drop - out' problem at NCC, there is a major problem of grade 7 "pushover". As reported in this study, about 80 percent of grade 7 school leavers are 'pushed out' of the school system without proper alternative education for them. The majority of them walk the streets without any job or educational activity to join. This has caused a major problem for the Zambian government and it requires immediate attention.

The alternative education (correspondence education), which is found for those who had no chance to go to Secondary School level and the above-mentioned grade 7 school leavers, is inadequately supported by the government. Hence, the above discussed problems are forcing students to drop out from the NCC. Most of the problems revealed in section four and discussed in section six have led to the exodus, which can be easily solved by the National Correspondence College.

The data and results presented in section four indicate that the NCC needs major changes in order to lessen the drop - out problem. The key is to make resources available so that other projects can be carried out such as training NCC staff, improving the lessons

(e.g. making them into booklets) and negotiating with the Post Office to improve the delivery of lessons and worksheets to and from the NCC and students. These support systems should be developed in recognition of student needs. The distance learner once helped, becomes competent and self - confident in learning, and improves their relationship with other people.

Once contact between students and tutors is limited or restricted, students tend to lose motivation and drop out from their studies. This statement is supported by a number of writers in the literature review (section two) and the data from the survey. It is emphasized that it is important for the distant learners to get help from people who are familiar with the educational system by which they are studying (distance education) and address the problems the students are facing.

Traditionally, Zambians do not favour the idea of working independently because the Zambian culture prefers them to work communally. Because of this cultural background, and the need to deal with all sorts of problems noted in the survey, students drop out; decentralised system is recommended so that the NCC staff are at the 'door steps' of the NCC students.

Recommendations – Decentralised system:

A complex series of factors as indicated in results section and data discussion (section four) caused drop - out from the NCC courses. Drop - out will decrease through changes to how distance education is offered and managed by NCC. If some of the reasons for drop - out can be successfully addressed then the rate of drop - out may be decreased and the learning of those who do not drop out may be increased. So the recommendations derived from the research are addressed to the NCC.

The Principal's Office:

(a) English courses and teaching:

Because problems with the English language relate to all contact and lessons with NCC, the Principal's office should conduct intensive introductory bridging courses in English. This should be done before enrolment to enable those with English difficulties to study the lecture notes more easily.

(b) Turn around:

Because of the current slow turn around of lessons, the Principal's office should investigate means to reduce turn around time to a minimum in order to diminish drop - out.

(c) Statistics:

(i) Student records:

The Principal's office should make more use of students' records already gathered in order to understand the NCC students' background. This can be useful in many ways, such as writing new courses, revising existing courses, and in allowing tutors to keep in touch with the varied needs of their students.

(ii) Profiles:

The Principal's office should keep profiles of its students and drop - outs so as to note how the profile may change and in what ways the NCC differs from the research results of other nations (e.g. why more females drop-out than in other countries).

(iii) Assessment:

The Principal's office should conduct frequent, random and non - punitive checks of tutor comments on worksheets being returned to students. Such things as legibility of handwriting, degree of encouragement, substance of comment and level of bias in point of view should be checked.

(d) Information to students:

The Principal's office should provide stories of successful NCC students to help its students become aware of the importance of their NCC courses and the benefits of successful completion of their studies, despite problems and interruptions.

NCC teachers (Writers):

(a) English Writing:

The teachers should write the lessons in simpler English in order to allow the NCC learners with low English skills to study.

(b) Updating the Materials:

The teachers should update the lessons as stated in Tables 6.25 (16.8%) and Table 6.26 (9.6%). This exercise should be on going as existing lessons are revised and new lessons are written. These revisions should be on, for instance, discrepancies, excessive overlap and redundancy, with an eye toward eliminating them and making the lessons consistent over the range of subjects.

(c) Contact with students:

The NCC teachers who are the academic advisers of the students, should create general communication with students so that if something unexpected or unusual happens during the course of the students studies, the teachers should be understanding, encouraging, flexible and responsive in the students learning needs so that the students should continue with their studies. This might encourage students to continue studying.

Tutors:

(i) Marking courses:

The NCC tutors should use a standardised marking guide/system and make comments on the student's worksheets that are helpful and provide remedial advice and encouragement.

Advisory section:

(i) Advising the students:

The NCC advisory section should provide clear and simple instructions to the aspiring students prior to the beginning of their studies.

(ii) Encouraging students to re - enroll:

As echoed in section five and indicated in the (Table 6.24), it was remarkable and encouraging to find out that despite all the problems the NCC drop - outs face, they still wanted to study with the NCC. This therefore, suggest that students have not closed the door to studies, but leave their options open.

It is in light of this, therefore, that the Advisory section at the NCC should be concerned with this matter and contact students who have withdrawn. The advisory section must inquire if the dropped out students are ready to re - enroll and offer assistance.

Despatchers:

Delivery:

The NCC dispatchers should send the lessons in packages of 4 - 5 lessons. This would help- to avoid delays and thus the student would not waste time waiting for the next lesson. Also lessons should be available so that they can be sent to students in the correct sequence.

Training in Distance Education:

In order to meet the requirements of the above, there is need to train the NCC staff in distance education. Those at the NCC need to be aware - from the Principal's office to the despatcher - of the importance of their contribution to NCC distance education programme and the success of the students. This will correct deficiencies and foster positive practices.

Final Recommendations:

(i) Postage:

The NCC should strongly propose to the government of the importance of re - introducing free postage or subsidized 3rd class rates for the NCC students. The study (see Tables 6.25 and 6.26) revealed that NCC students dropped out (7.6% and 17.4%) because they can not afford posting back their worksheets for marking to the NCC. This is considering that most of the respondents lacked family support see Table 6.11 (37.7%) and found studying with NCC expensive (7.9%). It is important

that the government should re - introduce free postage or subsidized 3rd class postage rates to alleviate their problems and ensure that the NCC can cater for those who are poor.

(ii) Funds for the NCC:

In order to meet all these requirements, the government should make funds available to help in decentralising the NCC, train the NCC personnel and purchase all the materials. Decentralisation of the NCC would enable the NCC to meet many of the requirements indicated in this study.

If the NCC is to make its proper contribution to education and thus the development of people throughout Zambia, then additional financial and human resources are necessary.

Decentralising the National Correspondence College:

(iii) Introduction:

A number of suggestions have been made above in order to improve the operations of NCC. But, as long as the suggestions do not reach the authorities at NCC and government officials, few improvements will take place. Therefore, the framework for alleviating the problem of drop - out is to decentralize the NCC operations (see Table 6.25 - 16.8% and Table 6.26 - 34.8%) so that among other things the provision of face to face tuition (see Table 6.26 - 16.5%) and English tuition (see Table 6.21 - 38.6%) which was lacking, will be met.

A proposed decentralised model for the NCC is set out in figure 8.1.

(i) National Level (NCC Institution):

At the NCC, administrative staff required will include the Principal who will be in charge of the affairs of distance learning and teaching in Zambia. Of particular importance will be the Principal's responsibility to train necessary staff to carry out these recommendations. Also, the Principal will need to ensure that the quality assurance of the materials and their distribution is maintained.

The Principal should be assisted by two Deputy Principals (one for Production and Distribution and the other for Development and Evaluation). The two Vice Principals should also be assisted by Division Heads, administration and personnel in charge of areas such as planning, records, counseling, facilities and equipment and other support staff such as secretaries and typists.

As for the professional staff to work at the NCC, they should include: (a) media and subject specialists who should have academic training in media and education, one subject area and a competency in at least one aspect of educational technology, for example, instructional development or evaluation; (b) technicians who are skilled in a number of fields including operation and maintenance of radio equipment, graphic production and materials printing; and (c) support staff who will include clerks, secretaries, drivers and so on. All staff will need to understand their special contribution to the efficient working of a distance education provider.

(ii) Regional and District Level:

In the provinces and districts, the Principal and his staff at the NCC Headquarters will be assisted by Education Officers, teachers/lecturers, at least one academic member of staff and one education officer in each province and two education officers and a teacher/lecturer in each district, who will be the link between the NCC Headquarters and the province and district level where the learner is located.

In the districts there is a need for professional staff to correct student assignments. Professional staff at the NCC should prepare students' learning materials. Volunteers to tutor students should also be invited from local school teachers as well as any other persons who may be specialists in some subjects.

(iii) Local or School Level-Training NCC Students:

At the local level, all primary and secondary schools or appropriate community facilities should serve as study centers for NCC students' education.

(iv) Future Studies:

The future researchers at the NCC should:

- (1) Explore strategies for the development of a decentralized NCC;
- (2) Determine the costs and benefits of a decentralized NCC; and
- (3) Explore further ways to make the NCC a more effective distance education provider, meeting the needs of the nation and the learning needs of the people of Zambia.

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APPENDIX A

Addressing the Problem of Drop - outs From Distance Education Programmes

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF Drop - outs from Distance Education Programmes

SOME QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
who have Studied Through the National
Correspondence College

National Correspondence College
Private Bag 20,
Luanshya, Zambia.
Telephone (2) 510 900

INTRODUCTION

This is an educational study being conducted in order to find out why some people do not finish the program of study/course at the National Correspondence College. Your ideas may help the National Correspondence College (NCC) to find answers to a number of problems.

You can seek help from friends and relatives in order to complete this questionnaire.

When you complete the questionnaire, fold the papers and place them in the enclosed pre-paid envelope. Post the envelope to the National Correspondence College as soon as possible.

Thank you

NOTE

DETAILS OF RESEARCHER:

- Mr. Cosmas Katye Makunka,

- Member of staff-National Correspondence College
- Post - graduate student (Masters of Education)
- University of New England, Australia.

QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS:

You are requested to complete the questionnaire and provide your answers in the spaces provided.

BACKGROUND

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|-------|
| 1. Your Sex: | MALE | ..... |
| | FEMALE | ..... |
| 2. Your Age: | 14 – 16 | ..... |
| | 17 – 20 | ..... |
| | 21 – 25 | ..... |
| | 26 – 35 | ..... |
| | 36 – 45 | ..... |
| | Over 45 | ..... |
| 3. Your Marital Status: | MARRIED | ..... |
| | SINGLE | ..... |

4. When did you enroll in the National Correspondence College?

MONTH

YEAR

5. Has anyone in your family studied through NCC?

YES

NO

6. Did they complete their studies?

YES

NO

7. What did you enroll in?

JUNIOR SECONDARY

SENIOR SECONDARY

8. Why did you enroll in the NCC subjects?

.....

.....

9. Have you ever enrolled in distance education subjects/courses with another agency?

YES

NO

10. During enrollment, were your studies interrupted for a certain period of time?

YES

NO

11. What were the reasons behind this interruption?

(a) DEATH IN THE FAMILY

(b) ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY

(c) THE LESSONS WERE TOO HARD

(d) DELAY IN SENDING THE LESSONS

(e) OTHER REASONS:

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

12. Did any of the reasons in question 11 cause you to stop studying altogether?

YES

NO

13.1 In which subjects did you find problems?

JUNIOR SECONDARY
(Pick your subjects)

SENIOR SECONDARY
(List your subjects)

.....(i) ENGLISH

(i) _____

.....(ii) MATHEMATICS

(ii) _____

.....(iii) GEOGRAPHY

(iii) _____

.....(iv) HISTORY

(iv) _____

.....(v) CIVICS

(v) _____

.....(vi) BOOK – KEEPING

(vi) _____

..... (vii) ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCE

(vii) _____

13.2 How would you rate the subjects? (Please tick)

JUNIOR SECONDARY:

ENGLISH	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
MATHEMATICS	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
GEOGRAPHY	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
HISTORY	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
CIVICS	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
BOOK – KEEPING	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
	Very Difficult	Difficult	Fair	Easy	Very Easy

SENIOR SECONDARY:

(i) .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(ii).....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(iii).....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(iv).....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(v).....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(vi) .....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

13.3 How much work were you expected to do? (Please tick)

	Far Too Much	Too Much	Fair	Little	Very Little
JUNIOR SECONDARY:					
ENGLISH	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
MATHEMATICS	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
GEOGRAPHY	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
HISTORY	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
CIVICS	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

BOOK – KEEPING

ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCE

SENIOR SECONDARY:

(i)

(ii)..... ..

(iii)..... ..

(iv)..... ..

(v)..... ..

(vi)

14. On average, how many hours per working week did you spend on studying?
(Please tick)

1 - 5 HOURS

6 - 10 HOURS

10 - 20 HOURS

MORE

15. While you were studying with NCC, did you have problems?

YES

NO

16. If you had problems with studies, did you have someone to ask for help?

YES

NO

If yes, was the person (or persons) you asked your:
You can tick more

MOTHER

than one person if they helped you

FATHER

- WIFE
- HUSBAND
- UNCLE
- FRIEND
- CHILDREN
- SCHOOL TEACHER
- MISSIONARIES
- GRANDFATHER
- GRANDMOTHER
- OTHER
-
-

17. List down the most important things which you learnt from your lessons?

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____

18. List down the things which you did not like from your lessons?

- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____

ENDING YOUR DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDIES

19. When did you stop studying with NCC?

- MONTH
- YEAR

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. You are requested to post the questionnaire as soon as possible to the Principal, National Correspondence College in the pre-paid envelope provided.

THE END