

The Effect of Gender Division of Labour on the Education of Rural School Children

The case of two primary schools in Medig, Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore the effects of gender division of labour on boys and girls in the rural area of Medig, Metta in Cameroon. The main activity of parents in this area is farming. Children, besides going to school, have a role in the household work and they also assist their parents on their farms. Combining household chores and farm work with studies affect the education of the children. The study revealed that in addition to the need for labour, poverty and cultural beliefs of rural parents have contributed to the decision to put their children in domestic and farm activities, bringing about gender division of labour. Gender determined roles continue even in school.

Feminist and Maslow's theories were used to guide the findings of gender division of labour between the children in Medig. The Feminist theories helped to explain the reasons behind gender discrimination in work type, while Maslow's theory focused on the psycho-social dilemmas children face when motivation and encouragement is lacking in the home and in their learning process.

The data for the study was collected from primary and secondary sources. Qualitative research method was employed in the collection of the primary data. These sources helped in the assessment of gender division of labour in Medig from the perspective of parents, teachers and pupils through oral interviews with the aid of semi-structured questions.

The results showed that gender division of labour between the children is part of the social relations between parents and children. It is a way of transmitting their culture to the children such that, it remains inevitable for their livelihoods and the upbringing of children. This leads to the relegation of education to a secondary position if not total neglect.

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DEDICATION

To my Mother,
Julia N Akam

And to my father
John Akam Njoh
of Blessed memory

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEGE	Common Entrance General Examination
CETE	Cameroon Entrance of Technical Examination
FLC	First School Leaving Certificate
GAD	Gender and Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MECUD	Metta Cultural and Development Association
MINEDU	Ministry of National Education
MRC	Mbengwi Rural Council
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
ILO	International Labour Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WID	Women in Development

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Protection of children and ensuring their future development into responsible citizens is the primary reason why many people and organisations are concerned about child labour. Child labour has been found to be one of the major obstacles to children's development especially in Africa (Bass 2004). One area that is quick to suffer is primary education. The deterioration of the primary educational quality in Cameroon has been compounded by the disparity in rural urban availability of resources, for example teachers and infrastructure (Tamukong 2004). Rural schools as a result are constrained by problems of insufficient teaching staff and these problems are further complicated by traditional values that discriminate between boys and girls in terms of work type and access to primary education.

Feminist theories have been used to guide and to provide the framework to explain some of the reasons for the differences in work type assigned to boys and girls. It emerged that children within the same household are usually treated differently. There is an unfair disparity, which puts girls at a disadvantage. Boys and girls do not carry out the same functions within the household alongside learning. Girls, as a result of the gender division of labour, spend more time assisting their mothers; by the length of time they spend working either with their mothers or in the absence of their mothers. This is perpetuated and enforced by parents and is seen as a normal practise by the society. However, educators do not take this imbalance into account in the assessment and the evaluation of the children.

The academic performance of pupils of both sexes remains a major concern to all actors in the educational enterprise. When pupils perform well in school, do their assignments, arrive in school for classes on time and register less absent from school, people will be less concerned than when some are irregular in school, late for lessons and drop in their performance. This implies that significant differences in children's performance attract at least concerns of some kind.

My interest is in the issues that call for these concerns; the things that influence children's educational aspirations, the kind of work the children perform before and after school, the time they get to school and how often they absent themselves from school. This is because, the time they have to study at home besides learning in school could be remarkably responsible for the variations in educational achievement of children.

1.2 Objectives

The above discussion has indicated the existence of division of labour between boys and girls in the rural Medig region of Cameroon. The causes are many and it inevitably affects the education of children of primary school going age. The objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the education of the children is hampered by the gender division of labour. Specifically, how does the division of labour according to gender affect the education of pupils of primary schools in Medig in Cameroon?

1.3 Research questions

The following questions were explored to help discover the extent of gender division of labour in the Medig region.

1. In what ways is gender division of labour practised in the Medig region?
2. How does gender division of labour influence boys and girls education in Medig?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers, parents and pupils about gender division of labour?

1.4 Background to the study

Cameroon is located West of Africa border by Chad from the North, Central African Republic from the East, South by Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea and West by Nigeria. Medig the study area is located in the North West province of Cameroon. Cameroon been a developing country has a large rural population whose livelihood is dominated by subsistence farming (Mungah 1994). Most of these agricultural activities are done manually by parents with the assistance of their children using crude tools. The importance of this economic activity is underscored by the fact that it is the main and often only source of revenue. Income needed to meet other household activities is generated from these farms and children are the main source of labour.

In addition to farm work, children are also involved in different household activities such as child caring, cooking, laundry, fetching of wood, fetching of water (sometimes several kilometres away) and washing dishes. Parents tend to concentrate on their daily activities rather than what takes place in their children's educational lives after school hours. What some parents do is just to pay school fees, buy some school materials like text books and provide school uniforms. Once these things are provided for, parents' responsibilities for their children's school end. What they need to do after school like revision of previous lesson or preparation for the next day lesson become secondary, if not neglected. They seem to be completely unaware that what the children do before and after school and the inherent conditions, in its entire ramifications social and psychological, are a strong determining force on the children's upbringing and equally their educational progress.

In Medig, for instance, the adverse economic climate and the level of education of most rural parents do not render the home a very convenient place for children to live and study. Not only are the family sizes usually large, but the children may not have such basic materials like reading tables or even a separate room to study at their convenience. Children in their homestead have to grapple with their studies and other household chores that I will repeat here for emphasis: cooking and caring for their siblings – a common activity for girls and splitting of wood by boys. There is also the fetching of water and firewood in addition to assisting their parents in farm work. Consequently, there is hardly any time for real academic work especially for the girl child.

Gender division of labour is widespread in Medig where families struggle for survival under the pressure of worsening poverty. Many parents see the contribution of their children as part of the learning process. They consider farm labour and other activities as the normal transfer of knowledge and skills to their children that is essential for their own survival. Children need to be aware of the ins and outs of local economic activities, which have been transmitted from one generation to another. This belief in addition to the high illiteracy rate in the rural communities does not place most of the parents in a position to be able to make a meaningful follow-up of the children after school; seeing that their home work and or assignments are done and ensuring that

there is enough time for studying. They consider school to be where formal learning takes place. When the children return home, they must work. Parents are of the opinion that children have to be aware that they have to work before they eat and this belief is prevalent in the larger society.

The growth and development of children in Medig has been conceived with the idea that children are the parents' source of assistance (labour), especially the girl child. Thus, children are trained to work at their early ages (Kielland & Tovo 2006). Though there is some common work done by both sexes, because the children spend more time with the mother than their father, the female children bear the burden of most of the work.

Gender bias in work type in most families is encouraged by the parents because as the children grow up they start by assigning them different duties according to their gender. The differences in work type are informed by the expectations parents and society at large has of females on one side and males on the other side. While the male is expected to grow up to be the breadwinner of the family, the female is expected to take charge of domestic work. Therefore, the birth of a male is welcomed with a lot of joy in African families. This gives the impression that, the male child is more valued and respected. The male child is seen as the family successor and not the female child. The male child is seen as a potential leader in the community who must be given skills in order to take up that role at an older age. This reflects in the kind of work allocated to the male and the female. The male child hardly does any domestic chores. It is the female child who is largely responsible for the household. In this way, the male child has more time to study after school than the female child. The female child is then considered as the mother's representative and so always has to be with her mother whenever she is cooking. According to Beal (1994) the girl's closeness to her mother is associated with being obedient and calm compared to the boys who are noted for stubbornness and roughness.

This is not to suggest that the male child does not engage in any activity. The male child may assist the father to split wood, cut grass for, and generally take care of the farm animals. The point, however, is that hard as the male child's activities may be, it is not frequent and does not take as much time as that of the female child. Depending

on the commitment of rural parents, children's involvement in the work activities varies in scope and time. Kielland and Tovo (2006) observes that

Rural children who attend school and rural children who don't have approximately the same number of working hours, school work included: rural girls both those in school and those not in school, have an average workday of seven and a half hours, while rural boys, both those in school and those not in school, have an average work day of six and half hours (Kielland and Tovo, 2006:17)

Usually the effect of gender division of labour on the children is not realised by the parents besides the apparent poverty, which has assumed normalcy. Parents are of the opinion that, besides studying, the children as a normal activity have to assist with household and farm work. Children have an obligation to work in exchange for food and the provision of their personal needs. When the parents return from their daily activities, either from the farm or market, their primary interest is in whether the work they assigned to their children has been done. This situation is perfectly captured by Kielland and Tovo (2006) as he notes that child labour in Africa results mostly from the household and that, children are associated with household assets like land and animals. The land is cultivated for either commercial or household consumption and children form part of the labour force because of the lack of income to hire labour. Also, the poor nature of education in some rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa instigates parents not to see the importance of education for the children, especially the girl child. The benefits of education seem distant and out of reach. Therefore, parents make the children work so that even without jobs they can provide for themselves.

Kielland and Tovo further explains that most parents are reluctant to do work they consider to be meant for children as they are of the opinion that the work has to be done by children. By the time the children return home from school, parents are psychologically prepared for the children to fill their vacancies. As such, whatever the case and the activities of the child, he/she has to come home from where ever and perform the home duty as a child and as his contribution to the family.

The children considered in this study are primary school pupils of classes five and six who are of the ages 9 to 14 years and consequently have spent the longest time in school and may have a wider experience when it comes to the influence of their work on their study. It is against this background that this study is designed to ascertain the current trends of gender division of labour within the household in Medig and to establish its effects on the education of both genders.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

There is a growing awareness of the horror gender division of labour has on children and this has triggered international outrage and the demand for action to mitigate the situation. In Cameroon, gender division of labour is said to be on the increase especially in the rural areas where children have increasingly been involved in household activities and farming to help their families raise food and income as one of the crucial needs of families (Mungah 1994).

Parents' contribution to gender division and bias in the work assigned to children is significantly noticed as parents involve children in different work type. They also consider the gender division of labour among other things to be a kind of socialisation of the children into the different roles of their parents and training towards their future careers. Their participation in household work and a-hands-on contribution to the education of their children remain essential for the better management of the home and their children's education.

The traditional perception of gender division of labour between the children is difficult to argue as it is an activity that has taken its path as society evolved. According to Bass (2004) definition of child labour in Africa is a complex situation to analyse, given the nature of child labour or child work, regional, rural and urban differences. These differences combine to shape and give an understanding of the activities of the children within different regions and locations in developing countries.

Traditionally, the girl child is trained by her mother in domestic work like cooking and caring for children, which are considered as her future role and responsibility, whereas the boy child learns from his father to be superior and perform activities that

are out of the domestic circle and more of an income generating nature. As a consequence, the boy child is given more opportunity and priority (as the future head of the family) and more education (as a representative of his family) than the female whose education is less valued and ceded to domestic work (Plan 2007).

The aim or the purpose of this study is to identify the extent to which gender division of labour between girls and boys of some primary schools of Medig affects their education. In so doing, I intended to find out:

- a. The extent of the differences in the type of work performed by the different genders.
- b. The extent to which these differences in gender division of labour between the genders influence their educational activities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will be limited to finding the influence of gender division of labour on the education in two primary schools in Medig. Pupil between class five and six of government primary school and a catholic primary school were those involved in the interview. Thus, the finding for this study was limited to class five and six pupils of the selected primary schools in Medig North–West Province of Cameroon.

1.7 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study will help to bring to the fore the negative effects associated with gender division of labour and help to break down socially and culturally constructed gender barriers. Hopefully, this study will be able to contribute to knowledge in this area and help to raise the understanding of all educational planners, and parents on the importance of education for children of both sexes. This study could serve as a guide to any Non governmental organization who may have an interest in the development and well being of children, especially females, in the study area.

School authorities will be able to use the results or the findings from the study to shape their policy on gender and in addition, try to encourage parents, through various Parent and Teachers Associations (PTAs), to increase their involvement in the education of their children.

To the pupils, it will serve as an eye-opener on how to approach their parents on the kind of work assigned to them and hopefully lead to having a reduced workload before and after school hours if the results of the study warrant this.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This study has been divided into five chapters. Chapter one comprises of the general introduction of the research problem, background to the study, statement of the problem, significance, research questions, a background and the map of the study area. In addition it gives a background view of various perception of gender division of labour in African and Cameroon.

In chapter two, discussion on literature related to gender division of labour has been employed. With two theories the Feminist theory and the Maslow's theory of growth and development which shows the various developmental stages that guide the success of a Childs upbringing and success in education.

Chapter three gives a discussion on the research method used, followed by some of the limitation of the study. In chapter four, the data on effect of gender division of labour is presented and analysed according to the information collected from the informants. This is followed by a general summary of the different views of parents, teachers on gender division of labour between the genders.

The thesis ends with chapter five drawing conclusion from the information collected form parents teachers and pupils. It further concludes with relating the theories used and some possible recommendation that might be used if need arise.

1.9 Gender division of labour in Cameroon and other African countries

Gender division of labour in Cameroon and Africa in general may vary from region to region or from one community to another. But this paper will look at gender division of labour specifically from the background of the rural area. The reason is that gender, division of labour in Cameroon in particular differ within the rural and urban region and within different ethnic groups in Cameroon, in a way that the demarcation of gender roles between men/boys and women/girls will posit different valves. With the different geographical location of the regions, tradition, race and ethnic groups the

prevailing patriarchy role dominates at the detriment of women/girls in the society. As women/girls tend to participate and being incorporated in devalued, unproductive work rather than in productive paid work as it may support their family demands and personal needs independent of their husbands. This section will focus on related studies of gender division of labour in rural areas of Cameroon as the study region. It will be followed by a tentative view of the situation of gender division of labour in other African countries as a pilot survey of how gender division of labour is perceived out of the study region.

1.9.1 General overview of gender division of labour in Cameroon

Cameroon is a country with diverse ethnic groups. Gender division of labour varies from one ethnic group to the other. With a greater portion of the population living in the rural areas and whose main economic activity is dominated by agricultural, gender division of labour becomes a complex issue to define. (Mungah, 19994) It is hard to make a general conclusion that child labour is necessarily bad because as argued by Bass (2004) child labour in Africa is a means for family survival. This therefore implies that families consider child labour an important supportive factor for the family to meet domestic needs. According to Neba (1987) the ethnic groups in Cameroon are the “Bantu and the Semi-Bantu in south, the Sudanese and Fulbe in the North with a group consisting of the minority Pygmies in the South. The North is considered the Moslem North and the south the Christian South. These differences in religion have created differences in cultural attitudes in gender division of labour and education between the genders. The different ethnic groups in Cameroon have distinct cultural differences with regards to religion, traditional norms, and beliefs. Moslem women/girls are the most marginalised suggesting a strong tie to their religion. The claim is that the woman or the girls’ place is in the kitchen. A man has to fend for the family and the man has the right to marry more than one wife according to their religion. Polygamy is legal for Moslems compared to the Christian culture where though polygamy is practised but is not legal. With the acceptable rate of polygamy there are equally more children with few girls having access to education than the boys. Girls are considered responsible for household domestic work as part of their informal education to prepare them as future housewives. This contributes to the negligence of the education of the girls as compared to the boys who are encouraged to go school.

Considering the dynamics and variations in gender structure in Cameroon, Mungah (1994) outlines how cultural differences have created differences in gender access to education between the North and the South. In the North the general enrolment of girls is still drooling behind as compared to the South with an encouraging enrolment of girls in basic education. Whatever the point it shows how gender division of labour, is detrimental to women and girls not having access to equal education as a result of cultural belief. Though Bass (2004) argued out clearly that, child labour should not just be attributed to culture, and assuming that nothing can be done to relegate the situation. Rather that, irrespective of the positive or negative view of child labour it should be considered in relation to level of development of the society and the different values regarding it (ibid). Education is the only means through which women and girls can escape discrimination. This is reinforced by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and PLAN as donor organisations in Cameroon investing huge resources in rural areas to educate rural girls. (Mungah 1994)

Education is both the foundation and the unifying force of our democratic way of life. It is the mainspring of our economic and social progress. It is the highest expression of achievement in our society enabling and enriching human life. In short it is at the same time the most profitable investment society can make and the richest reward it can offer (Kennedy 1962 cited in Mungah 1994:10)

From the above quotation there is the indication that the reward to education constitutes an indisputable means of change. In the access of girls to school, the roles of patriarchy domination will be challenged and addressed to the advantage of the women and girls. Women and girls will be able to compete for jobs and fight against male domination and suppression and the division of work by gender will be eliminated.

In Cameroon there is a general low budget to the Ministry of National Education (MINEDU). Instead of increasing the budget allocation is dropping. "In 1993/1994 the budget allocation to MINEDU dropped by 14.6% and further dropped in 1988/1989 fiscal year by 10.9%." This has compounded the problem in the educational sector in rural areas especially at the primary level with insufficient

teachers and infrastructures. Though primary education is considered tuition free, because of insufficient teachers and teaching materials, a small fee is implemented by the school, called the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) fees (Mungah 1994). Parents in the rural areas are obliged to pay this fee to meet the payment of part time teachers and some school materials. With the poverty constraints it becomes difficult for parents to meet the payment. This pushes parents into gender discrimination in educating the children and in some cases neglect the importance of education especially for the female child.

Nsamenang (1987a) cited in Nsamenang (2000) notes that Cameroon is a society that is still dominated by men. Men have developed the desire to have many children and will prefer to live in poverty rather than to die without a child. As Jahn (1961 cited in Nsamenang 1987:5) points out “for a Cameroonian to leave no heirs is the worst calamity that could befall a man”. The parents are interested in large families and more interest in having a male child which is considered the future heir to their father and the family. However, with the large family size women and girls are burdened with heavy household activities and this reflects the schooling nature within the rural areas. Nsamenang (1992:6) shows that gender division of labour reflects the level of schooling in Cameroon, pointing out that “44.9% of male to 37.3% of female received basic education and out of this number only 14.6% of male and 8.9% of female received secondary education”. This is influenced among other factors by the gender division of labour where the female works longer and is overloaded with household chores compared to the male. As such, the work the female child performs is given more honour than the education she could receive. This goes to explain some of the reasons why girls are usually late for school and sometimes even absent from school.

Similarly, reports according to Nsamenang (1992c) cited in Nsamenang (2000) shows that, Nso girls’ and boys’ participation in caring for their younger sibling is 67.2% and 65.2% respectively. The above indicates more girls are therefore responsible for child care than boys. The International Federation for Parents Education, Paris, France (1980) identifies the differences in education for boys and girls in a study carried out in Cameroon that, girls start learning at a very tender age household work, carrying of the baby on their hips for long hours. While the boys are given freedom as the mother is too liberal to the boy and strict to the girl child. The parents’ reaction and treatment

of the children differently, has been seen that the boy grows to learn and see his position in the family different from that of the girl with more rights and opportunities than that of the girl defining his rights and duties in the family. In other words, the education of the boy child is preferred to the girl's and the boy child with little work has time to study than the female child who has always to stay by the mother and assist in household activities as need arises.

A similar incident is noted by the situation of water scarcity in Bertoua (one of the provinces in Cameroon) according to PLAN forum in PLAN Bertoua the villages lack portable drinking water. Families have to trek for kilometres to fetch water. This task is performed by women and girls ,as quoted “ Worse is the fact that this unworthy task is assigned to only girls and women who are victims of discrimination and young boys privileged to have good education” (Encyclopedie de la Republic unie du Cameroon 1981 cited in Nsamenang 2000:5). In this situation girls are absent from school or arrive at school late as they have to fetch water which is considered their duty before they go to school. The hours they trek to fetch water probably they get tired with the distance, and will not be able to concentrate well as they get to school.

The structure and welfare of the Cameroonian families is not well defined in that tradition clearly defines the father as the head of the family but does not define fathers' role in the upbringing of the child. Feeding of the family is traditionally considered the responsibility of the mother in the Bamilike of the Grass field of Cameroon (Feldman-Savelsberg, 1994 cited in Nsamenang 2000). In Cameroonian polygamous homes, it is the mother's prerogative to maintain the family and educate the children. Parents are seen to play different roles in the socialisation and the education of the children. The home needs are not provided for by the husband instead mothers are to maintain themselves and the children. Mothers faced with such constrains are forced to involved children in different activities to meet up household needs and education for the children (Nsamenang 1992 cited in Nsamenang 2000).

The level of education determines the economic status of the Cameroonian women. Because women are occupied with household work and subsistence farming to meet family demand for food, they have access to very little income which does not give them access to credit. Women faced with such constraints have to be submissive to the husbands as they will always ask for assistance from men (Nana-Fabu 2006).

According to Fonjong and Athanasia (2007), the gender division of labour in rice cultivation in Ndop Cameroon is remarkably recognised as the demand for rice and labour increases in the region. Women and men have individual farms but the women have to meet the household activities besides cultivating their own farms and other food crops for the family. Women use children as their means of labour while men hire labour which in most cases are the woman and the children. “Women and children consist 50% of the family labour with only 4% of hired labour”. This increased in demand for rice labour has a negative effect on the children as they work for about 10 hours a day with very little time to study (Fonjong and Athanasia 2007:141).

With men and women involved in rice production in Ndop, the family responsibility is abandoned to the women as they become responsible not only to meet the household demand for food but also to educate their children (Fonjong 2002 cited in Fonjong and Athanasia 2007). He further explain that, about 40% of rural women indicated that income generated from the cultivation of rice is used to educate their children, but their limited access to hire labour has lead to the involvement of children in family labour and this affects the children’s education in that at times the girls have to stay home and care for the younger ones (Fonjong and Athanasia 2007). Women are therefore kept working all round the clock as they have to produce food crops for the family besides cultivating their own rice field as the income generating product to supplement household needs. The over work load on women has a negative effect on the children as the demand for their labour has drag the mothers to continuously need their contribution as it remains substantial to meet family labour in order to increase yield. Since increase in yields will mean having enough for family consumption and surplus for sell to generate some family income. Serpell, (1993) cited in Nsamenang (2000:6) states that, “the demand for child labour does not mesh well with schooling based on the European time table”. There is always conflict between the demand for family need and demand for the children’s education, which is often the result of poverty whereby children are over loaded with work.

The gender division of labour according to Sikod (2007) assign different roles to the man and the woman to ensure the provision of family needs. But that, some are “gender neutral and some gender biased. For example, child care, household care

(cooking, cleaning, fetching wood and water) are activities ascribed to women that are gender biased” and “gender neutral process is on where in a household, comparative advantage and the maximisation of household welfare is used to determine which partner does what” (ibid: 3). In rural areas in Cameroon other factors contribute to widen the gap in gender division of labour which Sikod name as “kinship, age, decent, culture, education, status and marriage” (ibid :3) She further explains that, the integration of rural women in market activities to meet household demand could help to break the barriers of gender division of labour and suppression from men. The reproductive work of the mother, which is labour intensive and time consuming remains a barrier to their involvement in the market oriented activities as a means to dismantle the gender bias in the family. Education is the only means through which barriers to gender division of labour can be addressed. Because through education, women will have opportunity to paid jobs and support the household financially.

According to Mungah (1994), the intensification of gender division of labour is influenced by the differences in development of the male and the female child. Mungah’s view is that the male and the female children from birth develop differently. Differently here she is trying to explain how their growth and maturity differ between the girls and boys of the same age. The girls are considered to attain maturity much faster than their age mates’ boys as well as, to be more experienced than the boys. This is the reason why mothers in the early ages of the girls start training them into most domestic work than the boys which subsequently becomes a threat to their education.

1.9.2 Reasons for gender division of labour in Medig

Gender division of labour in Medig to a greater extent is attributed to the social and economic situation of the people. As noted by Kielland and Tovo (2006), child labour in Africa is the result of poverty as most African countries are classified among the poorest in the world. With most rural areas faced with stark poverty with most resources concentrated in the urban centres. Such as good school facilities, infrastructure and sufficient teachers whereas the rural areas lack most of the basic necessities to facilitate for the education of the children with decrease in children labour (Tamukong 2004). Due to the insufficient availability of learning facilities, the school tend to demand extract support from the parents.

In Medig parents are involved in subsistence farming with very little income generating activities to meet household demands for education, health and food. Plagued with this difficulties children's labour becomes part of house activities as a means to assist the parents meet household needs and increase yield for household consumption. These responsibilities are placed more on the women/girls as they are considered the ones in charge of household food supply and domestic activities in and out of the household. This has placed women into less privileged class within the African socio-cultural setting wherein education for girls is seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. As such domestic activities are perceived the rightful place for the women or the girls and are given more attention. In the words of Sikod (2007), as earlier mentioned states that gender division of labour is gender biased. It is biased as revealed by the reproductive role assigned to the women and the girl child. While the productive role of gender is considered mans' role as the controller of family finances and bread winner of the family.

In Medig, like other rural areas in Cameroon agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy. According to Mungah (1994) a greater part of the Cameroonian population is rural and dominated by agricultural activities. Today, farming still remain the most dominant occupation. There are basically two types of farming, the subsistence farming and cash crop farming with the later gradually disappearing with the drop of the coffee prices in the world market. Subsistence agriculture is the cultivation of food crops destined for local consumption. Here any surplus is exchanged for money, which can only help to supplement some basic needs like salts fish, meat and household clothing. Cassava is the staple crop in Medig, palm oil production, rearing of goats and pigs. Most of the compounds in Medig rear pigs; this activity is dominant and is carried out by both men and women. Young boys are highly involved in it. Today pigs in Medig are reared as a means to generate income for the family. In this way children's contribution to it cannot be missing. With the increase in prices of pigs and pig feed, parents have devised other means through which feed can be complimented. Pigs are now also been largely fed with particular grass, and as they are confined because of their destructive nature, the grass is cut manually. This is largely done by the children and usually the boy child. The boy child has to manually cut large quantity of grass even though from a distance it is transported in wheel

tracks home, after which the boy child has nothing to do for the day, in which case he can have sometime to study or for assignment compared to the girls who are always called for assistance by the mother.

Looking at the gender division of labour here the male job looks hard but it is less time consuming compared to the female child who in assisting the mother in the kitchen has also to do other errands and care for the younger siblings. In this light, the boy child can still have time to study and would be less tired than the female child.

From the situation the children find themselves and because of circumstances beyond their reach they are bound to work even at the detriment of their education. Poverty constraints on parents in the Medig rural area have intensified the gender division of labour as parents struggle to meet household needs. It is against the poor agricultural background of the Medig valley that gender division of labour is still feasibly seen as means to train children and fit them within the society. As the Metta slogan goes that a hard working child is an example of the father and a bad child is attributed to bad training from the mother.

1.9.3 Perception of gender division of Labour in other African countries

I will like to admit here that African though a single continent has as it difference in language, cultural and traditional aspects. Being aware of these differences so too is the perceptions of gender division of labour that exists within this continent. In a study carried out in many African societies focused on how gender works; Kevane (2004: 125 & 143) described how the different genders are treated. He termed it “the gender treatment of boys and girls and investment in education”. He noted that because boys and girls are treated differently within the society one remains dominant and holds a prestigious position in the family. In typical African societies girls are neglected based on socio-cultural belief that girls should be educated in household activities and mother role that prepares them for their future home. Whereas boys have been considered as the future family representatives and need education to be able to support the family.

A similar study by Kevane (2004) in Uganda revealed that parents prefer the boys to do less work and have more education while girls are supposed to be by their mothers to be more knowledgeable of the domestic activities that best situate them according to societal norms. In addition, it is believed that educated girls have very little knowledge of household work and men will not want to marry them. This scares Ugandan parents to educate girls as local norms discourage the education of girls based on grounds that they will not have husbands which is considered a burden on the parents (ibid)

According to Rose and Tembon (1999) cited in Heward and Bunwaree (1999) conducted a study on the reason for gender gap in Ethiopia with a comparative study of the rural and urban areas, noted that, difference in education for boys and girls is a manifestation of the socio cultural constraints on the women who involve girls in their work load at home. The participation of girls in the household has a significant and cultural backing that is perceived as training, coupled with the fact that they are considered to marry early such that education is not considered really necessary for the female. In addition it was revealed that parents have preferential treatment for the boys and girls when compounded with limited resources. With limited resources boys have advantage over the girls so receive education while the girl child as a result of the marginal role receives little or nothing. Girls are not given much preference when it comes to education, reasons been that, they are to be prepared for their future home and need to concentrate on their household activities. In view of the gender division of labour, Alavi (1982) cited in Charles (1993: 159) had a survey of the “gender division in the third world” points out that “Whatever way it is conceptualised, the significance it holds for understanding gender division in that women are the ones who undertake the bulk of the activities in non-capitalist or subsistence sector”

The quotation shows the extent to which gender division of labour in the third world portrays a negative constraint on women. This subsequently and indirectly affects the women/girl children who are always occupy with more of the household domestic work.

However, gender division of labour according to White and Killick (2001) is a consequence of poverty. This is contributing to the devaluation of the education of women as a result of the combined roles of child care, farming and household

activities laid on the women. In a “Supreme Court ruling in September 1999 shows that women in Zimbabwe are inherently inferior to the men” (White and Killick 2001: 92). It is therefore held that women/girls despite all their contribution towards the running of the household are still been considered inferior to men/boys and are associated to less positions in and out of the household, giving the impression that women/girls roles in the society are feasibly invisible and devalued. Whatsoever the woman roles and efforts in the society and in her family it is still not recognised as active participant who has to have a say in not only matters but decisions that concerns her life.

1.9.4 Conclusion

Evidence from gender division of labour in Africa, Cameroon and Medig suggests that due to high level of poverty in developing countries especially the situation that prevails in rural areas, children tend to be of economic value and as a result become a desirable asset for struggling parents. Children significantly contribute to family’s needs as they engage in assisting the parents at home in child care, laundry, fetching of wood, water. Therefore, gender division of labour among children is an intrinsic component of survival in African rural areas because most rural parents are unemployed, have no fixed source of income. Children, therefore, are needed to assist in most household work for parents to carry out other activities that could generate income for their family needs.

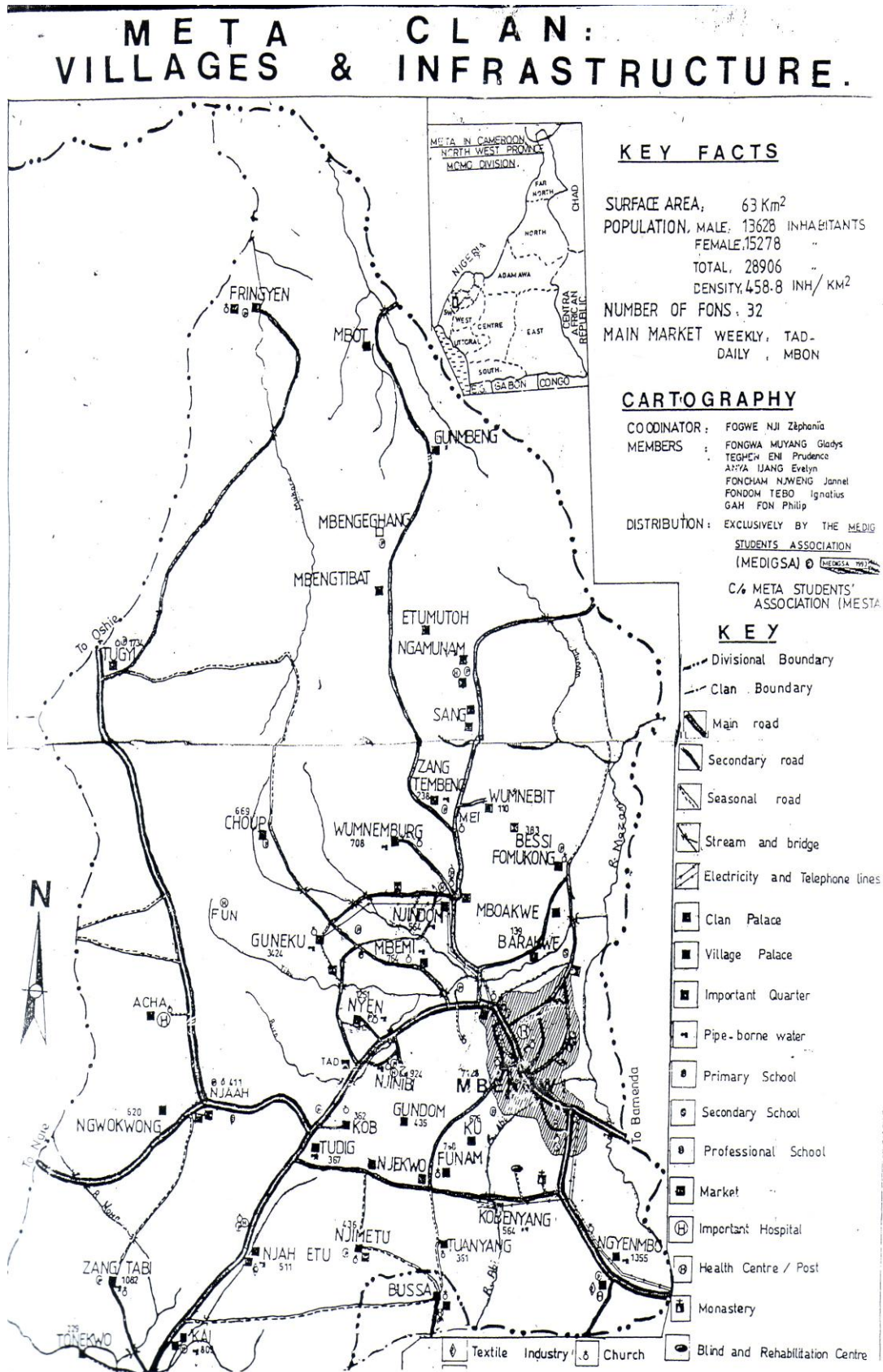
1.10 The study area

Metta is located in the North West Province of Cameroon with an estimated population of 3,3989 inhabitants. The area is divided into four different zones, Medig, Bome, Tontah and Gutah. Medig is largest in terms of the population and the surface areas. The greater part of the prominent economic activities is concentrated in Medig followed by the Bome Zone (Maureen 1997). The selection of Medig as the case study for this work instead of the any of the other zone was peculiarly due to the emerging activities of the region. Medig is much closer to the divisional head quarter Mbengwi where there are mixture of agriculture and economic activities such that parents and children gamble between household and income generating activities for the family living. The region can be seen as a semi-rural area experiencing rural and an emerging urban activities due to the location closer to the divisional headquarter.

Though the population is still largely dominated by agricultural activities a lot of the economic activities are concentrated where access of transport system is easy, several markets and business locations. There has been increase creation of primary schools, vocational training school and Secondary grammar schools compared to the other regions. As a result of the emerging activities within this region parents, activities have also been affected such that children becomes of valuable assistance as parents struggle to exploit the economic activities at their disposal.

However, it is also worth mentioning that the settlement pattern in Metta is not uniform. Some villages have isolated settlement with huts dotted here and there, while others have compact settlements. In the villages, many people have settled along the main roads. These roads are linked by foot paths to far off villages. The rational for choosing Medig region for the study was because it is densely populated than the other zones. Secondly the researcher having grown up in the area is conversant with the environment and can easily create contacts such that information for the study can be collected. Thirdly Medig is at the centre of Metta with one of the largest market and is well known for palm oil production, such that there is continuous increase of activities as mentioned above with parents trying to exploit all this avenues.

Fig 1: Map of Meta



Source: Medig Student Association

2 LITERATURE REVIEW, CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In the pervious chapter the introduction, the background and an overview of gender division of labour in Africa and Medig has been given. This chapter will proceed on the theoretical frame work as a reference frame on which to argue and explain the evolution and development of gender division of labour between the genders.

Giving an explicit explanation of the situation of gender division of labour on the education of primary school pupils requires a theoretical framework. It is upon the frame work that, presentation and analysis of the findings will be directed (Lindsey 1990). It presents the views expressed by different people on gender; differences in gender division of labour and education and the reasons for the work type assigned to the different gender. The study will be based on two theories; Maslow's theory on the hierarchy of needs and feminist theory. The use of Maslow's theory in this work is to show the various developmental aspects that are associated with growth and the development of pupils as they strive to achieve success in their daily lives and in their careers. Feminist theory is to bring out some of the reasons why girls and boys are treated differently and how gender division of labour is linked to tradition and poverty. This will provide the study with a view through which gender division of labour and education is perceived by parents and teachers as those who on daily basis spend considerable time with the children. This places the study in contemporary context according to Fox (1996: 122):

Through a process of integration of past research and thinking with current research and thinking, we move knowledge forward. For this knowledge to function successfully, each researcher must know the past so that he can design research to build on what is already known and study what is not... Every research project whether in the social or physical sciences has as one of its early stages a review of theoretical and research literature.

In social research there are many theories that explain and give researchers an understanding of phenomena. These theories guide the identification of several social aspects of the society as culture, education and the social organisation of the society

(Linsey 1990). They help to explain the complexities of society. The theories used in this thesis provided a guiding tool for the analysis and interpretation of the primary data. The use of the feminist theory in this work helps to explain the differences between males and females in the Medig society. To date, women/girls are seen as subordinates to men/boys in most activities that surround their daily/social life. There are several feminist theories discussed. This work will be based on the views of Liberal and Socialist feminists who argue that men/boys or women/girls should be given equal education and that the suppression of women/girls resulting from the dominant role of men (patriarchy) be eradicated.

The following discussion looks at child labour from the different view points of other researchers, in order to capture the focal idea of child labour within and among societies with a focus on aspects related to gender division of labour and its effect on the education of rural primary school pupils.

2.2 Gender differences in academic achievement

Differences in opinion as to who does better in academic work have not only kept parents, educators, international organisations, the learner themselves but psychologists in mental worries. Maslow's theory of growth and motivation notes that, motivation is what causes children to act, which can be internal or external. Needs are wants that may be physiological like the needs to such things like food drinks and sleep (Farrant 1980). It is as a result of the above argument that child labour, gender division of labour becomes necessary.

2.3 Concepts of child labour

There are several views regarding child labour in Africa and in the Western society resulting from cultural differences and living standards. Bass (2004) and Kielland and Tovo (2006), from their study on child labour in Africa, have a good view of the different forms of child labour in most African countries. They show how child labour is not only considered a function of childhood among rural farmers in Africa, but equally as social integration of children into their different roles in the society as a guide to their future roles as adults. According to Bass, the division of work by gender is a result of the African patriarchy supremacy where the male is considered superior

and hierarchy to the female. Children, as a result of the gender differences their parents' portray, are socialised into the different social roles of the parents.

Due to ethnic and traditional differences in Africa, child labour, gender division of labour has been interpreted differently. The various forms range from care for siblings, fetching of water, fetching of wood and begging for alms, which needs to be combined with school. Bass (2004) Confirming with his research, in Cameroon, the caring for siblings is considered the responsibilities of the older children. Some girls are made to stop school to care for their younger siblings and to return to school when their siblings are of school age.

The peculiar situation of rural Africa has created contradictory views as to what form of work undertaken by children could be considered child labour. There are those who consider child labour to be those jobs children perform for payment such as baby sitting and housekeeping whereas some consider both the income generating work of the child and the domestic work children carry out as equally child labour. The parameter therefore for analyzing the different forms of child labour varies between individual as well as counties. Being aware of the differences in child labour between individuals, societies and countries is important for the understanding of the local contexts within which child labour takes place. Perceptions of child labour vary. While some forms of child labour seem shocking to some people or societies, in others it is considered the normal socialization of the children into their future careers (Nsamenang 2000). Therefore, answers to child labour will equally vary depending on the study area and the source of information available. The following paragraphs give the perceptions of child labour among different societies and cultures and what the International Labour Organisation (ILO) considers as child labour.

According to Basu and Van (1998) the International Labour Organisation define child labour as children who work in risky jobs such as factories, prostitution, long working hour and heavy work load with very little resting time and are within the ages five to fifteen years. These children are compelled to work as a result of the stark poverty that parents are plagued with, which does not reflect the attitude of the parents but the conditions under which the family undergoes (Basu and Van 1998). Similar to the above view Rahikainen (2004:11) defines child labour as “the work children do in the

labour market, rather than in the parental household”. The above assumptions are built on the fact that child labour is basically based on the paid jobs that children perform in or out of the homes. Household work is considered as “all activities done by children... which provide a necessary contribution to the family or the child or lead to profit for a third party” (Rahikainen 2004: 11). Rahikainen further outline that “some children work while others play or receive school instruction. Access to formal education has for centuries been crucial in streaming children into different life courses” (ibid: 13). The above statements show that the work or the types of work children are socialised into have both a psychological and sociological consequence on the children’s access to formal education. This brings us back to the notion of a unique examination of Maslow theory that outline the support and motivation children need from parents, for education success.

A study by Basu and Van (1998:13) suggested that “Children can be stopped from labouring in factories but there is little the government can do to stop children working on family farms”. This supports the view expressed by Bass (2004) that it is necessary to be aware of the different view of societies regarding child labour as there are no standard forms of evaluating child labour in Africa due to the variations in locations and backgrounds of African children. To understand what happens in any particular society, one needs to understand the different values that are associated with child labour within the different localities. The contribution children give to the family provide for the proper function in the daily activities of most rural African families. Children’s involvement in different works indicates the desperate need of the parents to support the family demands. Bass describe it thus,

“Not all child labour is bad. Dealing with it as universally evil complicates any strategies that might address the issue. Indeed, in many circumstances child labour is a mixed blessing, as household juggle opportunities to let their children eat (Bass 2004:3)

He is of the opinion that putting children to work is not necessarily bad due to the fact that families associate children to household labour and other activities to meet household need for food. The negative effects of putting children to work will be noticed if their learning and/or education is affected. Subsequently, using children as a

source of labour is necessary to meet not only their daily activities but also to serve as training for the children into the different work type associated with the parents.

Bass (2004) further notes that legislation on child labour accepts children to do light work at particular ages and difficult work from the age of eighteen. Generally, this reflects the western view of child labour without considering the background of the children and the environment in which the children find themselves. As a result, attention to the different forms of child labour creates a situation of mixed feelings rather than an understanding of the conditions that surround and involved the children into working. Arguing against the blanket labelling of working children as child labour, Kielland and Tovo (2006) notes that working children assist in the survival of the family and will be unreasonable if children were not to work. Working in and out of the home is the contribution of children to the family and it gives both parents and children the satisfaction of being useful to the family and subsequently, being prepared for their future lives.

The above views reveal contrasting ideologies as to the specificity of child labour/child work and where and how they can both be categorised. There are those who consider both paid and unpaid work done by children as child labour while some are of the opinion that only paid jobs and work considered harmful and hazardous to children are seen as child labour. Given the anchor point of this work, gender division of labour, discussion on this work will be based on the domestic work the children perform and the negative effect it has on the children's education.

Kielland and Tovo (2006:53) outlines child labour "in and around the household" as those daily activities that children perform within the home such as going on errands for their parents. Others include, "subsistence agriculture, child caring, fetching of water, fetching of wood and herding". The centrality of child labour, according to Kielland and Tovo (2006) and Bass (2004), is not just to question if children work but the hours, the environment and the circumstances that surround the upbringing of the children within a particular area. As noted by Bass (2004) and Kielland and Tovo (2006), child labour on its own is not bad but that, the context in which it is defined will determine the nature of the labour. From their point of view, the differences in perceptions within and between societies pave the way for differences in challenges

regarding child labour. However, obtaining information on child labour is sometimes frustrating and misleading because most surveys on child labour do not take into consideration domestic work where women/girls form a majority of the household domestic workforce and so this goes unrepresented.

Bass (2004:3) points out that “child labour is a mixed blessing.” The use of children by parents or relatives, contribute drastically to the survival of the family in terms of food security. Since food is very crucial and an important element of the family and household, children’s assistance to fetch wood facilitates cooking of the food. In an environment where there is no pipe borne water at home, the contributions of children in fetching water for cooking and other house needs is invaluable. Care for siblings provides the parents time to carry out other activities such as business and cultivation on farms which is all to meet the family’s demand for food, health and education. The above observation is in line with the view held by Reynolds (1991) that labour performed by children contributes to increase farm yields to mitigate what would otherwise be a food crisis faced by most rural households. This explains the continuous use of children as a source of family labour and is not limited to household activities alone but also to agricultural activities as the main source of food for the family. The family can therefore meet its nutritional needs from its own farm.

The work children do, either paid or unpaid, should not be such that their education and general well being is subordinated. Even though what constitutes child labour will continue to be debated, such debate needs to factor in domestic work. Capturing domestic work will reveal inherent biases that are rooted in gender. In rural Africa, it is often, the female gender that suffers.

2.4 The concept of gender

The concept of gender has been characterised with several approaches with no single definition to the word gender. There are those who see gender from the point of view of differences between the male and the female; some from the physical characteristic, while others classify gender from the conceptual view of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). Women in development focus basically on women as an entity while gender and development focused on the differences between the male and the female as social aspect of their lives (Cranny-

Francis 2003). This reflects the nature and extent to which gender has been institutionalised. Focus on gender was an effort to integrate women in development with a consideration of the social relation between the genders.

According to Cranny-Francis (2003), gender gives a distinction between the male and the female in two categories: The first is by looking at the male and the female in activities that characterise their daily life and behaviours differently. Yet as a daily action, and because it is noticed everywhere, it becomes difficult to realise its operation and existence. Secondly, gender can be differentiated from biological perspective in relation to sex differences, as the physical characteristics that distinguish a male from the female. Language is used to differentiate the masculine features from the feminine. Gender exists everywhere consciously and unconsciously in the way society uses not only features to differentiate the male from the female, but also expression in the identification of the gender. Cranny-Francis (2003) further explains that the social structure of gender has not only distinguished it into categories but has empowered and privileged the male against the female in the society with arranged or distinctive roles.

There is a shift from the conceptual view of Women in development to Gender and Development. Whereas the former focuses on women in isolation, the later looks at women in relation to the men. That is, an identification of the male and the female in their activities resulting from gender differences. The shift from WID to GAD is based on the fact that WID put more emphasis on women in isolation concentrating on their financial efforts to development rather than their subordinate and productive contributions, which remain invisible. On the other hand, Gender and development (GAD) provides for a more closer look at the power relations between men and women in diverse situations with a focus on the class, race, gender roles and contribution to development (Moser, 1993). However, the manner in which women's work was perceived in accordance to their sex lead to a focus on gender as a clear distinction of the different roles men and women have or women in relation to men in their activities within the society and the social construction of these roles. Therefore, a focus on gender and development is to get an insight into the real problem of women as subordinates, powerless, voiceless and dependants. The evolution of WID and GAD leads to the incorporation of the challenges women face in development

discourse and how the situation of women can be addressed by integrating them into development programmes. Differences in gender roles and activities have led to diverse opinions and the definitions of the term gender.

Many scholars have different opinions as to the origin of gender (sex) differences, as well as different definitions of the word gender. Hornby (1989) defines gender as the differences in sex. This definition is simplistic and does not take into consideration the complexities that are associated with economic and social imbalance. Bennaars, Otiend and Sheilla (1990:136) indicate that gender is “a classification peculiar to human beings alone.” Yet, Kevane (2004) offers another definition that seem to explain further what Weiten (1992; 418) calls “culturally constructed distinction between masculinity and femininity.” Whiles Weiten’s definition attempts to capture the power relations produced by culture, Kevane looks at the social side of the coin. According to Kevane,

gender is the constellation of rules and identity that proscribe and prescribe behaviour for persons, in their social roles as men and women. Such rules may be deliberate or unintended (Kevane 2004:1)

It can be assumed that gender encompasses socially constructed roles which have influence on the behaviour of men and women or boys and girls in the society, on their lives and activities. An analysis of gender is therefore important as the outcome of gender interactions is the power dominion by males and a disparity in the distribution of resources between men and women, as well as class demarcation between men, women, boys and girls within the gender circle.

These contrasting definitions have created a forum for the differentiation of gender by sex (from the biological perspective) and gender from the social and psychological perspective. Hall (1990) supports the definition of gender from the biological point of view. Whiles the biological composition of human beings or the physical characteristics that differentiate a male from the female is important for in conceptualising gender, it is equally important to take into consideration the environment in which the individual is socially brought up. Gender and education, gender and development, gender and empowerment, gender rights and gender

exclusion in developing countries today have been given much substantial emphasis as several writers and organisations are involved in a number of ways to uplift women from the challenges of gender inequality and empower women and girls within the world of development paradigms into active participants in issues that concern their lives and the family. This is to bridge the gender gap that exists between women and men with the discrimination of women visibly seen as the marginalised group in not only their domestic activities but also in their education.

The impetus for a general fight and identification of gender has been represented within a wider spectrum of socio-cultural and the economic lines. In a similar manner, the growth of gender issues within development spectrum has created gender awareness and the importance of gender in development programmes in the world to uplift girls and women from the stereotype patriarchy dominion. As noted by Cornwall (2008), gender has generally gained attention in the development limelight and has been institutionalised in different ways; Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) donor organisation, and in Master programmes in Universities. Generally, gender issues have drawn the attention of many actors in areas of study like development geography, sociology, anthropologists and development studies. Thus the above fields of study have developed different concepts, theories and perceptions pertaining to the understanding of gender as an entity. The evolution and the development of gender, gender challenges and gender division of labour can be attributed in part to the growth of feminist actors. Their aim was to empower women and girls through education, correct the gender disparity in education and promote gender rights in the society (freedom of expression) so that women can be represented in their own class and opinions as active participants and not passive participants.

2.4.1 Gender perspectives

Gender perspective refers to the situation where socio-cultural antecedent of gender inequality and gender roles are recognised. Results of the allocation of gender roles have created differences in education, power, wealth and authority, giving different status to men and women within the same set up with one sex dominating the other. Gender roles, a common phenomenon among rural African families, is considered an African tradition. This is contrary to the Western view of gender roles where there is no clear and static demarcation of gender roles as each individual is an active

participant in certain domestic chores (Petrikin 1995). Children perform different activities which identify them with either the father's or the mother's role in the family. Gender roles have been used to differentiate the different activities of gender using the role model or categorization model (Beal 1994). Classification of gender, through gender role, gender identity and gender expression, has perpetuated the differences that exist between the genders in their activities and especially in their educational attainment in most rural African societies.

Gender categorisation according to Beal (1994) sheds more light and understanding on how children learn to be girls and boys in any society. Children grow to see their parents carry out different functions within the household. Therefore, they grow to identify themselves with the different roles performed by their parents and emulate them as they grow. It becomes easier for the children to follow the trend of work of their parents without questioning (Boserup, 1970 cited in Nsamenang 2000).

2.4.2 Gender role development

The “gender role development” as noted by Beal (1994) has and is attracting many readers as personal experiences vary, as each individual has grown up as either a boy or a girl, such that gender roles are creating doubts as to whether there are really roles that differentiate a girl from a boy and as to whether it is necessary to make the gender role distinction that seems to create a barrier between the gender. So people have different feelings as to why there exists the division between the male and the female or why the different sexes at a particular point behave differently in their activities and their thoughts (Beal, 1994). Differences in religion, race, ethnicity and tradition have influenced the different gender roles men and women perform in the society, though there are some similarities as well as differences because of the variation of the social construction of this role as some are not well demarcated (Moser 1993).

The development of gender roles between boys and girls is determined from several perspectives regarding the behaviour that children portray and what the children learn from their different parents or peers. Consequently, the way they are socialised, determine their class and position in the society. This has led to a situation where boys and girls correlate with their peers differently in several activities that affect

their lives and upbringing. According to Beal (1994) children as they grow identify the different gender roles through learning observation and through their biological characteristics. These perspectives can be noticed in two different categories which include; the social development of gender and the biological determination of gender. This categorization of gender result from the differences that have evolved between the genders as they grow and their different reactions to activities within their environment has had some influence on the behaviours of the gender within their family and society.

2.4.3 Social development of gender

The social development of gender has been a very complex and debatable issue among social researchers and biologists. Gender has been approached from different perspectives depending on the usage and the meaning of what it means either to the social researcher or to the biologist. The social researcher approaches gender from their behaviours, taste, admire and their differences in interest of career while the biologist sees gender purely from physical characteristics that differentiate one gender from the other (Beal 1994)

2.4.3 Early learning between the genders

In Beal's view, learning develops as the child is born and is socialised within the family and the society. The socialisation of children begins with parent whose treatment of the children stem from their own perceptions of how and what their children should grow up to be. Secondly Beal sees children as very sensitive in learning especially at their young age where they like to imitate everything they hear, which he terms "the gender role learning" (Beal 1994: 282) Children are keen on observing any development around them, especially the activities of their parents and guardian. This is as a continuous process that develops as the child grows.

Another way children learn, according to Beal (1994) is through media consumption where they get information on issues that easily identify them as girls and boys. What the children see and do form part of the learning and observation processes as they discover their different gender roles in the family and the society. The physical characteristic that identifies and differentiates the gender gives them distinctive behaviours in their daily activities and actions. Boys are associated with very rough

activities like boxing football and are usually aggressive. Girls develop more skills and talents suitable for jobs that are considered less physically demanding. This seems to support the notion that girls are weaker than boys so have different gender roles within the society (Beal 1994).

Gender roles give children the recognition and the identification of a self concept that provides them opportunity for development and interaction in the society and a sense of security. Whatever the stand point, gender roles guide children and structure their learning, observation and participation in activities in the society and subsequently, they act according to their gender. The fact of these differences, whether social or biological should not be a basis for discriminatory treatment of girls especially in access to education.

2.5 Feminist theory

There are several feminist theories but the focus will be on those theories that are relevant for the study. The feminist theory approach to gender serves as a guide to discuss and look into the circumstances that surround the differences in work that girls and boys perform within their families and their society. The following feminist theories will be discussed Liberal, Radical, Marxist and Socialist as they all have explained the reasons for gender division of labour and the domestic workload of women/girls resulting in gender division of labour. The challenges of women in domestic activities and the oppressive role of women as outlined by the feminist theory provide a forum for women to work against their oppression from men and the society. Though they are all concerned with addressing the oppressive role of women, their theories differ in how they explain the origin and the continuation of the oppressive gender relations and how women could be empowered. This work will slants towards the Liberal feminist and the socialist feminist theory.

2.5.1 Liberal feminist theory

Liberal feminists have a long tradition of history that date from the 18th century in the work of Wollenstonecraft for the fight for equal rights and equal opportunity for women (Mannathoko 1992). Their theories focus on the discriminatory practices that impede women's equal participation in the society. They are also concerned with women's liberation. Whatever the case, their aim is for women to have equal positions as men in education, liberation from men's suppression and be involved in

decision making and activities that will be in favour of their work choice. Other feminists have criticised liberal feminist theory based on its negligence of structural inequalities and that the nature of inequalities is not well defined and spelled out. Another criticism is that power relations between genders are not well addressed and that these continue to increase structural inequalities between the genders. The above feminist view and its weaknesses gave the inspiration and the growth of feminists who focused on patriarchy and the privileged power position of men with women seen only in the less privileged position. One of the attempts to address the limitations of the liberal feminist theory is what has been termed as the radical feminist theory.

2.5.2 Radical feminist theory

The radical feminist theorists view the oppression of women in relation to the structure of society. Their view is based on claims that the structural relation between the genders has pushed power to the male and that the patriarchy role of males or men dominance over women need to be challenged. Men are positioned as having power, knowledge and control of the family as the head and as the bread winner, where their authority is unquestionable. Liberal feminist are particular on equal opportunity for education to both gender, but radical feminist question the quantity and the quality of education that is accessible to the genders. They believe gender bias in education is the cause of the perpetuation of female oppression (Mannathoko 1992). They argue for women empowerment through education and believe that through education there will be gender balance and dissipate the conventional belief of women's role as noted by the society.

2.5.3 Marxist feminist theory

The liberation of women was seen traditionally by the Marxist theorists as the liberation of women or girls from domestic activities to public activities, for women and men to have equal financial support. As a result this theory failed to account for women progress as their integration into the public sector was in low paid jobs. In a similar manner, Marxist feminists were criticised based on the grounds that gender as origin of male power independent or not dependent of the social class was ignored. However, each social class has a combination of the male and the female, but women are those who suffer from oppression in the different classes (Mannathoko 1992)

2.5.4 Socialist feminist theory

Socialist feminist theorist through criticism adopted some of Marxist-feminist and Radical feminist thoughts and ideas as a guide to their theory (Brock-Utne 1989). This gave the socialist feminist theories good argument against the marginalisation and suppression of women from the male dominated society and from cultural norms. The Socialist feminist theorists view the oppression of women and girls as a result of both patriarchal structure of the society and the capitalist logic. Domination by class and oppression of women is seen as capitalist reasoning. In other words, the domination and suppression of women was considered a consequence of capitalism. It differs from the Marxist view in that gender is considered as the pathway of oppression women undergo. It is difficult to distinguished between the radical feminist theory and socialist feminist theory, as they both perceived women oppression emanating from patriarchy ideology. Furthermore, socialist feminists noted that education is an impetus or an investment that will enable pupils to understand the power relations, which would enormously help liberate women/girls from oppressive roles (Odora 1993). In their view, massive investment in education is a good parameter that will argue out the subordination and patriarchy domination of women by men. Socialist feminist theories, therefore, see education as an important tool in confronting the challenges of women and girls from the dominant, oppressive role of men.

Despite the criticism of some of the issues raised, the points advanced by the feminist theorists are issues that affect women and girls in most rural societies, especially in African societies. The traditional belief that the man is the head of the house gives the man an unquestionable respect and power within the household unit. The man decides for the family and women in fear of being abused remain their subordinates. The role girls and women play in the family is something that transcends generations and gone on with hardly any question. As such, with no decision making power and being physically weaker women are placed under men as their subordinates. Unfortunately, feminism, as Meena (1992) points that feminism is considered by many Africans as a product of the west. They argue that feminism is relevant for the North (used here in reference to developed countries) and not the South (developing countries). The propagation and preservation of the African ideology about gender roles is what has resulted or contributed to the existing gender oppression on the continent. The perspective of feminist theories is to recognise and address the oppressive roles of

females. Though they differ in the ways in which they analyse the oppression of women (and girls), and also in ways through which women could be liberated, their interests are all geared towards uplifting and empowering women in a way that will give them equal opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The prevailing norms have located women and girls in an unequal position not only in education but also in issues that affect their lives and dominant occupants of household domestic activities. Women and girls face gender differences gender oppression and gender inequality resulting from living in a Patriarchal society. (Odora 1993). This difference is noticed in the way men/boys and women/girls are treated in the society and the kind of work allocated to them. Hence women are not only differently located in the society but are unequally located in nearly all aspects. This is why feminist theories have come to question not only women positions but also how the work the women performed is valued within the society. It is based on this assumption that the feminist theories have grounds to argue on women position and activities as active participants in the society and in development issues. They advocate that the productive domestic work of women/girls should be recognised and given monetary value.

2.6 Gender education and development

The conventional form of basic education is characterised by an introductory level of schooling, which is considered the base and foundation for any educational attainment in life. Therefore, it is important, as a starting point, to build a solid educational foundation at this level, which will determine the future development and the growth of children into responsible citizens of society. Stephen (2007) correctly points out that educated people have more chances and opportunities of getting better paid jobs and income. Gender division of labour potentially affects the education of girls and denies them full participation in this crucial introductory level. The aim of United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UNMDGs) to ‘achieve universal primary education’ by the year 2015 will invariably close the gender gap in education. (www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml) as investment in education is not only for the individual, but investment that will bring change and development to the country. According to a baseline survey of the World Bank, an increased investment in

education for girls will lead to low birth rates and consequently improve health for girls (Heward and Bunware 1999).

Similarly, Abagi (1995) expresses the view that education is a means to development where the suppressive role of women and girls can best be addressed and gender equity guaranteed. In other words, women will not only be educated but have access to opportunities that will empower and give them voice as men in the family and on their personal issues. Therefore, education has been identified as one of the major ways to liberate women/girls from the myth of playing the conventional role myth of domestic workers. Thus through education the stereotypical ideas that the male or the female is supposed to have a particular role could be eradicated or suppressed to such a degree that women will not be considered passive participants in development issues but active participants.

2.7 Impact of gender division of Labour

Impact can be defined as an effect which can either be negative or positive. Impact in this study will mean the negative consequence of gender division of labour on primary school pupils, which varies from one society to the other resulting from cultural differences and the social and economic situation of the families or the environment. The segregation of labour according to gender has situated women in unpaid and low paid jobs compared to men. This happens in terms of the number of hours the different gender spend working, as it determines the amount of income generated to support family financial demand. Gender division of labour is also associated with unskilled and skilled jobs, where women are those placed in unskilled and men in skilled jobs. Though women may be involved in some kind of paid jobs it does not refute the fact that their main priority is childcare and household food provision. (Charles 1993)

However, this demarcation in work type has an effect on the children. Though children are nurtured by their mothers, the influence of their environment and the differences in sex tend to make them act differently as they grow up. This has culminated in the division of skills along gender lines with men seen as highly skilled experts than the female in jobs such as bricklayers, electricians and mechanics (Martin 1984 as Cited in Charles 1993). The socially constructed roles, according to

Lorber and Farrell (1991), disfavour women in the control of resources. Male monopoly leaves women with little access to education and jobs, placing them in the domestic setting where it is devalued in monetary terms.

On the other hand, Mack (1985) cited in Charles (1993) argues that, women employment in paid jobs reduces household dependence on man and increases household budget. Thus, holding that, paid work is necessary to uplift women from home isolation and give them an identity in the society rather than just been domestic workers with no pay. Women's work has been considered temporary as they are often interrupted with domestic demands such as child bearing and nurture. This goes to reinforce the belief that women are responsible for domestic work. It is as a result of this that the domestic division of labour has continued to identify women and girls with the primary role as mothers and household carers with paid work seen as secondary role within their activities. Martin and Roberts, (1994) as cited in Charles (1993) show that a survey of family ideology is debatable on gender division of labour with a number of women and men accepting that "a woman's place is in the home and over 50% agreed that a husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the family" (Martin 1994: 68)

Gender differences in work becomes a social problem when children become involved in work that affects their future development and growth such as, long working hours, causing children to be absent from school and having little or no time to spend studying

2.8 Family and parental role of the child

The family and the role parents have in a child's development and growth is very essential. This section will present how parents' aspirations for their children, influenced by their children's gender, are determinants of their future careers and responsibilities. The family as a unit of the society has the responsibility and the duty to care for their children. Children need support and the direction from parents to follow their future trends in life. It is the most delicate time in the growth of the child where learning begins. This calls for greater parental attention especially since the child is still developing the ability to think and learn as a foundation for future learning.

The home environment has been identified as the starting point in a child's development, education and growth. Parents and the children constitute the family in which the child's development evolves and determines his/her future development in accordance with the family setting. Similarly, the family is the main area for the child's first experience where learning is highly manifested in the child's life and understanding (Winegar and Valsiner 1992). Thus, the influential role of the family shapes the understanding of the child and the child develops within the environment and the norms of the family in which the child finds him/herself. Though the family has been identified as having a central role in the child growing personality, there are arguments put forward that family and sociological researchers have neglected the unique and dynamic role of the family in child's growth and development. As has been pointed out by Scarr & McCartney (1992:162) cited in Winegar and Valsiner, "the specifics of this impact, that is the timing of integrative and regulative activities and the tuning of these activities with regards to child's developmental course has won only scarce attention"

The home environment contributes either negatively or positively to the upbringing of the child in and out of the home. Egana (1994) says that instead of the home being a help to the growth and the development of the child is mostly a hindrance as a result of low literacy levels in many African homes. In rural Africa, the children are put to work when they return from school. Children returning from school are aware of the tasks they need to perform and failure to complete those tasks often go with serious consequences including flogging at times. Kielland and Tovo (2006) notes that rural African parents find it difficult to do the work they consider to be beneath them because they are supposed to be tasks for children. Therefore, even without being given specific instructions, children know already what tasks they are expected to perform when they return from school. As parents return from their daily activities, firstly, they want to know if the children have done their worked with very few who will ask the children how it went in school on that day. Similarly, Plan (2007) noted that in most rural African homes, girls are faced with abuse and violence at home, such that they are brought up to understand that, the boy child is more respected. The girl child is socialised to understand that she is of the low status and has to assist and

take household responsibilities with little or no education while boys are encouraged to attend school.

More still, Datta (1994) views the educational attainment of the child to stem from the child's background, identifying the socio economic status and the family size as having a positive or a negative effect on the education of the child. He notes that, what the family transmits is imbibed by the child. According to him, there are two factors that determine a child's educational achievement. These are his/her will to achieve and his/her ability to achieve. These may be influenced by the school he/she attends or the environment in which the child is born and socialised into. According to Datta, other factors which influence educational achievement include the sub- culture, peer groups, social stratum and the environment.

Ezewu (1983) underlines that educated homes or educated families make a lot of contribution to the progress of their children because they send them to expensive private schools and equip them with school needs. The parents have books, television sets, radio and can afford to give them enough facilities and opportunities for effective study at home with little or less work during school periods. The children in this case do not only use the parents' libraries but have theirs. Parents complement school work by teaching the children at home. Such social experiences help children to acquire good education and develop mentally. Thus, "mental – image" of things experienced increases their cognitive capability. On the other hand children from poor homes are sent to farms or already have assigned work immediately they return from school or do other home errands. This affects their academic performance negatively, in that tiredness and very little learning time contribute to poor academic performance especially in the case girls who spend considerable time with their mothers on domestic household work.

Burton (1988) has found that parents have different occupational aspirations for boys and girls; he noted that parents are happy to see their daughters as nurses, social workers and secretaries and their sons as engineers, doctors, pilots and electricians. Males pursue these careers because as Weiner (1974) observes, parents are found to be more likely to coerce boys into more useful disciplines while girls are left to choose the discipline they like. In support of the above view, Eccles (1985) says

differences in treatment of boys and girls are particularly marked in the area of education and the kind of work that is assigned to the different gender. This is because society has made them to believe that boys are more intelligent than girls. With this in mind the girl or the female child is pushed to look at things and behave in the society according to the norms and the beliefs of the society. Consequently, her social development and participation in the society is affected as she will work to limit herself to certain aspects which she thinks can best fit her into the society in which she lives, rather than thinking and working within a wider and broader perspective to achieve her goals and be able to do what boys can do.

Leach (1992) asserts that in developing countries because schools have trade for the different gender, they prepare girls for limited vocational possibilities and the choice of subjects. Subjects available to them are often different from those offered to boys. Girls are encouraged to take disciplines like domestic science, dress making, beauty-care and catering. This writer believes that with the recent feminist trends of life, the situation will change with time. Leach shows that gender bias has contributed to girls receiving education that continues to prepare and place them in low status jobs. Parents' perceptions and educational aspirations for their children is important. Graham-Brown (1991)

In addition to Graham-Brown's view, Boocock (1986) also outlines factors which cause girls' low performance as follow; parents have low expectations of success for their daughters than sons. Parents' beliefs discourage girls of their perception of their ability to succeed. Such negative attitudes discourage them of any success. This has been proved even to the jobs they choose for them. In line with Vincent (2000: 5) "family exerts significant positive or negative impact on the child". Family's role in child development and growth remains a significant and outstanding mark in the future of the child. The family stands and remains the path way to the success and the failure of a child through their motivation and encouragement as outlined in Maslow's theory of growth and development.

2.9 Conceptualising gender division of labour and tradition

Tradition explains some of the reasons for the gender division of labour between men/boys and women/girls in most of the societies in the world today. (Bass, 2004)

Male and female have distinctive roles in the way they are brought up and treated within the families and societies trying to identify them according to their role structure. The origin of some of these gender roles can be noticed from the biological perception that women are the nursing mothers, are more conveniently seen to function better in some activities than the men. Such that gender division of labour can be seen as socially constructed in the way it is perceived and implemented by different societies and traditions. Though some writers argue that gender division of labour in some cases appears to be more flexible depending on the societies, as there are arguments that men perform female jobs just as female also can perform male jobs. However, with the flexibility of the gender roles it explains how gender role has been socially determined and how and why it transcends to the children (Hare-Mustin & Maracet, 1990; Riger, 1992; Unger & Crawford, 1992 cited in Beal 1994).

Beal argues that the flexibility in gender role does not cancel the fact that there are distinctions between the male and the female role or that because of the flexibility, gender roles have disappeared and so boys and girls are equally treated. The gender role expectation remains outstanding as boys and girls are expected not only to behave differently but also to act and work differently. For example, their way of dressing, manner of socialising between their peers.

The traditional division of labour between the genders might be very complex to outline as some societies consider it static and consider it to move from one generation to the other unquestionably, while some do not accept the societal beliefs of gender division of labour and consider man and women as equal in all aspect of the society. As such, traditional beliefs differ greatly among ethnic groups and countries in the way gender division of labour between children is perceived and defined. The world of today is magnified into diverse cultures, creating a situation of conflicting ideas as a result of different cultural beliefs that is affecting the work of the policy planners of the world. It is difficult to conclude on a single definition of culture with increasing usage and meaning among people and societies. As culture has been integrated in the way the society has its running norms and rules and the ability to transmit these rules from one generation to the other (Barker 2000).

However, culture is an influential aspect of gender division of labour among rural African population. The African idea or knowledge of culture (in relation to gender) according to Etoungue-Manguelle (2000) is standard with hierarchical respect for the men and subordination of women without questioning. Beliefs and power is linked to divine powers, as interference of instituted customs and norms is punished by ill-luck. Evidence of the influence of cultural attitudes is in the creation of a situation of gender roles for men/boys and women/girls. Cooking, house cleaning, fetching of water, laundry and care of siblings is attributed to girls' work while, cutting grass for pigs, fetching and splitting wood and cleaning of plates is seen as work for the boy child. Gender discrimination emanating from cultural practices is an outstanding problem particularly for women and girls who are often victims of subordination. These roles which emanate from tradition have little consideration of how detrimental they are to the growth and development of women and girls.

Heward and Bunware (1999) analysed of how education is perceived in some countries as against the cultural norms of the society. Instead of seeing education as a means through which women and girls can be empowered, it is considered as a deviation from the accepted norms of the society that girls are to be trained for household activities rather than being educated to compete and contribute in productive work in the society. Education is not valued for the girl child and the entrenched cultural belief and attitude have made girls to feel they have to stay close to their mother. So the girl grows to see and understands that she has to be close to the mother to be knowledgeable about her mother's activities and work as a way of mastering the different duties of her mother. Thus when her mother is absent from home, the girl is responsible to carry the home activities and care for the younger ones.

If African traditions are considered unquestionable, then the possibility for change remains a challenge to be addressed. This challenge can only be addressed through massive investment in education for women and the girl child as noted by Abdi (2005). He submits that women and girls can only be uplifted from the traditional oppressive role through education, which is considered the way to draw women and girls from the marginal line. Through education, women will get more meaning to their lives by having to compete for better paid jobs as men. This will enhance their

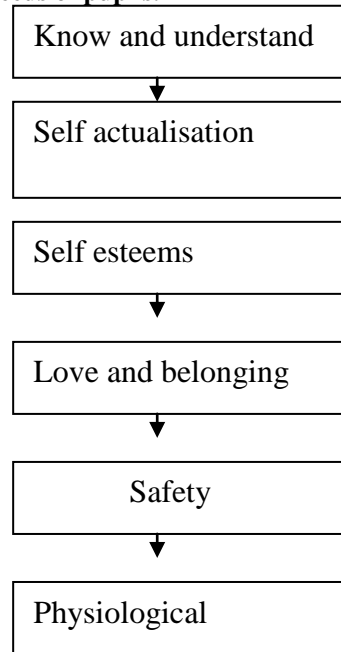
position and contribution to development and decisions in their homes. Similarly, Heward and Bunware (1999) noted that through education women would be able to protect themselves from domestic violence and gender discrimination in work and education.

2.10 Conceptualizing gender division of labour and poverty

Gender division of labour and poverty is difficult to define regarding the differences in culture, standard of living and development among societies and countries. For the purpose of this study poverty will mean, lack of empowerment and opportunity especially for the girl child resulting from gender division of labour within the household.

According to Therborn (2004) families view children as a source of assistance and so their contributions to family activities for the production of food. The need to feed family remains a substantial demand which the children must work to meet. Barrette, Carter and Little (1998) notes that the livelihood of children is based on the purchasing power of their parents. If the parents are poor the children demands cannot be met, as such they are bound to work to meet household or the family need for food. As a result, gender division of labour is perceived as training, so that even without white-collar jobs the children can meet their family needs. Besides going to school, getting training in the different work activities identified with their parents give the child a strong foundation to face future challenges. The figure 2.1 below shows the developmental needs of pupils.

Fig 2.1 The developmental needs of pupils.



Source: Adopted from understanding school learning by Howe (1972: 33)

1. Physiological needs: Food, drinks, sex and shelter.
2. Safety needs: Security, order, protection and family stability and support.
3. Love needs: Affection, group affiliation and personal acceptance
4. Esteems needs: Self respect, prestige, reputation and social status.
5. Self-actualisation: Self-fulfilment, achievement of personal goals, ambitions and talents.
6. Know and understand: Learning comprehension and application, achievement in task.

From Maslow's theory of motivation, when individuals have their lower or deficiency needs satisfied, they will feel motivated or pushed to satisfy highest growth needs not because of a deficit, but because of a desire to satisfy the higher needs (Lovell, 1973). Thus, unsatisfied lower needs are an impediment to the wholehearted pursuing of higher needs (ibid). Therefore, if children are unable to have such needs like feeding, security, parental encouragement, affection and personal acceptance, then they will be unable to pursue such higher needs like self actualisation, knowing and understanding which, in themselves affect academic performance in school. It can be inferred that an uncomfortable environment leads to poor performance and less concentration in class while, children will be more motivated and eager to learn in a relaxed and secured

environment, less threatening and welcoming classrooms. The researcher therefore feels that a child's physiology and environment out of classroom is an immense valve to his/her progress in school.

Weiten (1992) explains that males are self-confident and over estimate their abilities whereas female children are full of self-doubt and under estimate their abilities because even when they do well in certain jobs, they do not give themselves credit. Low self-esteem concept in relation to Mathematics and English interferes with the abilities to learn the subject. This lack of zeal can also interfere with the amount of time spent studying the subjects. With the grim nature of the gender division of labour, girls grow to think that they need only a certain level of education while boys who are seen as future household heads need to do more.

2.11 Summary

This chapter places the study within a theoretical context. It makes use of the following theories: feminist theories and Maslow's theory of growth and motivation. Research literature has been reviewed on the following sub-themes: the general concept of child labour, the concept of gender, the gender perspectives, feminist theory, perspective on gender roles, gender in education and development, the impact of gender division of labour on the children education, family and societal concept on the gender division of labour between the children. Gender division of labour and tradition, gender division of labour and poverty were conceptualised and reasons for gender differences in academic achievement explored.

3 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter was centred on the theoretical framework, trying to relate the theory and the concept of gender division of labour to the situation that prevails in Medig. In this chapter, the various steps through which data were collected for this study will be discussed. The challenges and the limitations that were encountered in the course of the collection of the data for the study and how they were minimised will also be outlined. The study was a case study of two primary schools in Medig. Qualitative methods were employed in collecting and analyzing the data from parents' teachers, pupils and focus groups. The techniques used were, semi-structured interviews, field observations and focus group discussions.

Data collection and analysis are fundamental components of every study. There are many ways through which data can be collected and analysed. But the choice of ways depends on the nature of the study in question. This chapter is written with this background under the following headings:

- The sources of data collection
- The research design
- Method
- Sampling technique and sample
- Administration of interviews and instrumentation

3.1 Sources of data and collection

In order to answer the research questions, primary data collection was conducted in Cameroon from 1st of September to 15th of October 2008. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. This provided information on the reasons for the actions and behaviours of respondents and the reasons for gender division of labour in Medig. To complement the primary data, secondary data was explored from existing material from the internet and journals. Personal observation was triangulated with interviews and secondary data sources to minimise errors and increase the validity of data collected.

Preparation for the field work was focused on reading literature related to gender and education and research methods.

3.2 The research design

A research design according to Nworgu (1991) is a plan which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed. Blanch and Durrheim (1999) and Yin (1994) describe a research design as a bridge in the implementation of the research and the research questions. The work is a case study of two primary schools in Medig, with parents, pupils and teachers as the unit of analysis.

Defining a case study is not without problems because of its application in both quantitative and qualitative research, and its similarities with cross-sectional design Bryman (2004). In qualitative empirical study, the term is associated with detailed investigations into a phenomenon, which is a process, events persons or things of interest to the researcher” (Gall et al 2003:436) making it useful in illuminating the different dimensions of social experience. It is interested in “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 2003:13)

Based on the explanations of Yin (2003), Bryman (2004) and Gall et al (2003), this study sought to explain in detail gender division of labour and its impact on the education of primary school children in the Medig area of Cameroon. As discussed throughout this thesis, gender division of labour takes place in a social, cultural and economic contexts and it is a ‘normal’ daily experience in the lives of the people of Medig. Therefore, the phenomenon of gender division of labour is not very distinct from the social and cultural experiences of the people of Medig. The case study lends itself to several different methods which are explained below.

3.3 Research methods

Though there are debates on the use of quantitative or/and qualitative methods, the use of either or both methods depend on the topic of investigation and the objectives of the study. They both have their strengths and weaknesses. Patton (2002) and Patton (1990) cited in Mikkelsen (2005) expresses that there are no standard rules for any researcher to determine any study but should base on the researchers’ method and

objectives. Hence a good research design is necessary for any successful research (Scheyvens and Storey 2003). This indicates that the appropriateness of a method lays in its ability to shed light on the problem to be investigated. For the purpose of this work the qualitative method has been used.

3.3.1 Qualitative method

The qualitative research hypothesis develops from American sociology and cultural anthropology (Kirk and Miller, 1986). This study used the qualitative method to ensure that informants have the opportunity to give their personal opinions and views on gender division of labour. Views were collected through interviews and conversations as the main research instrument. It involved the use of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and the observation of participants (Scheyvens and Storey 2003). Qualitative interviews provide for an in depth discussion between two individuals to better express and know how people or individuals think, work, their actions and ideas about the community and the world (Wimmer and Dominick 1994) thus interpreting people's attitudes and analysing their activities and their reactions to aspects of their lives and their community. Similarly Bryman (2004) explains that qualitative methods provide the researcher with an opportunity to collect in depth information from a natural setting where themes and theories could arise. The interpretation of the empirical data will then be analysed in order of the research questions. Despite the above view, Van der Geest (2005) notes that qualitative research based on a few and not the general population may provide false information as a means to generalise to the total population. Although researchers may increase the sample to avoid this pitfall, Yin (1994) argues that the objective of qualitative research is not statistical generalisations, but instead theoretical generalisations. As seen in the previous chapter, theory played an important role in this research.

Qualitative method was deemed necessary because information collected from informants' can be explained in detail following interview results and observations from the field. Hence, the qualitative method provided the opportunity to read the behaviour of respondents who were free to give their opinions about the questions asked. This gave me the chance to solicit how individual thinking and behaviour vary on the issues that surrounds their individual lives, society and environment.

3.3.2 Sample and sampling technique

The sampling technique that was used in the collection of data for this work was the non probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. Sampling may be defined to mean the selection of smaller but representative group out of the total number of elements to be considered in a study (Bryman, 2004). This smaller and representative group so chosen is then the sample. The sampling technique on its part is then a plan, specifying how the informants will be drawn from the population. With careful selection and background information the researcher uses his/her knowledge and judgement to decide or determine who to be interview based on the information needed to answer the research questions (Gall et al 2003).

3.4 Selection of schools and informants

3.4.1 Selection of schools

Two schools were selected from the study area. A government school was purposively selected and one Catholic school within the study area. The selection was based on the population of the schools and the duration of the school. There are some newly created schools in the region, which are not up to primary six which is the highest primary level attainable in Cameroon. Following Gall et al (2003) choosing a participant or/and case entails a careful examination on which schools would serve the purpose of the study.

3.4.2 Selection of pupils

The selection of pupils was purposive. Wimmer and Dominick (1994) explain that informant selection should be based on their informativeness and their importance to the study. The researcher needed children of school going age (primary level) who could express their opinions freely. Most of the children were very nervous and shy to talk for fear of being reprimanded for speaking their minds, but with a good degree of encouragement from the researcher and reassurance that the interviews were not examinations, some of them came out of their shell. Children that could talk freely and express themselves on their work type at home before and after school were considered. As previously mentioned, class five and six pupil were considered for selection for interview because they have spent the longest time in school, in addition they will have a wider experience when it comes to the influence on their household work on their study.

3.4.3 Selection of teachers

The selection of teachers was based on the classes they taught to correspond with the level of the pupils selected for interview. A total of 6 teachers from the upper primary classes were selected to participate in the study; three males and three females. The reason for the selection of a male and a female was to avoid one sided opinion and also to get varied opinion from the male and the female perspectives as teachers, and as parents to some of the pupils. The head teachers in the two schools were interviewed. Fortunately, the head teachers were also a male and female in the respective schools. The head teachers were considered for interview as those who run the general activities of the school and so will also have more experience about the situation of gender division of labour in the entire school. Again the head teacher is responsible for teaching any of the classes in the absence of the class teacher and that puts him in a position to have personal knowledge of the pupils.

3.4.4 Selection of parents

From the onset, I planned to divide the villages into Zones for sampling. But when I got to the field, I realised from the pre-testing that most of the rural based population are farmers, the answers were almost similar. I decided to change into non probability (purposive sampling). As noted by Hoyle, Harris and Judd (2002), with good background knowledge, a researcher can pick individuals that can provide information that will be relevant for the study. The reason for this method was to get varied opinions from parents from different backgrounds. Eight parents were involved in this study from different occupations and backgrounds.

3.4.5 Focused group discussion

Focus group discussions was use to compliment the individual interviews that were conducted. The selected group was based on their willingness and their availability. It was a group of parents who practised gender division of labour. Some appointments were cancelled due to rains and others because of funeral celebrations. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to eliminate the possibility of presenting one sided view. Further, to have a deeper understanding of the opinions of men and women from the individual interviews those were conducted.

3.5 Administration of the interviews

Interview for this study was based on semi-structure interview and focused group discussion. From the start of the study, I went to the Divisional Delegation for basic education in the Division, for authorisation to conduct research in the schools in their jurisdiction. The time I started the collection of information for this work was just at the reopening of the new academic school year. I decided to make a general tour around the schools before the start of the interview.

In order to facilitate the collection of the primary data, information was sent to the church to be announced so that parents would not be surprised by my visit to their homes. The announcement circulated to the parents easily and it was easy to get the attention of most parents.

Interviews of the pupils were conducted in the headmaster/headmistress' office during break periods in one of the school. In another school I had the opportunity to conduct the interview during their manual work hour. Since I went at the beginning of a new academic school year, the school compound was bushy with over grown grass, and this had to be cleared by the school pupils. Despite their much tight schedule, the headmaster and the headmistress made the effort to create some time for me to administer the interview.

Interview with the teachers was conducted in their various classes during the break period, where I met each of them in their respective class during break periods. This gave me the opportunity to have discussions with the teachers getting their different and individual views and perceptions. In all, the teachers were very cooperative in the way they gave their responses to my questions. Some of the questions that the teachers did not understand I had to explain to avoid misinterpretation. Interviews with the teachers took between 20 – 25 minutes each. This was due to the fact that the teachers had much school work since it was the beginning of a new school year. Discussions with some of the teachers were very interesting in the information they revealed. They were welcoming and enterprising. I asked the questions and got clarification where I had doubts.

Teachers were included in the study because they are those involved on daily bases in educating the pupils. Hence the children spend a greater part of their time with them in school. The perception of teachers with regards to the gender participation in class was of help in that they gave their observations about lateness or absenteeism and pupil performance. Pupil participation in class can best be described by the teachers.

Interview with parents was collected mostly on “Tan,” the village traditional day when no one is allowed to work using hoes or cutlasses. This is a day before the main market day in the whole of Metta (Medig is one of the zones in Metta). On this day, most people have to prepare their goods for the market as it is the biggest market where traders and buyers come from different towns to buy and sell. It was easier to meet parents at home on this day. Interviews with parent took 30-35minutes in their homes. Some took more than 40 minutes depending on the respondent. After each interview, 10-20 minutes was used to write out short notes on the respondent views. For the parents, the interviews were done in the Metta language which was the language that they could best express themselves in.

3.6 Scope of the study

The study area for this research was Medig in the North West Province of Cameroon. The region was purposely selected for its dense population, and because more farming and economic activities are located within the region. The region is one of the central locations for primary, secondary education, vocational and technical training. Metta, is divided into four zones. Bome Zone, Tontah zone, Gutah Zone and Medig. Medig because of its accessibility, the region has experienced the creation of a number of schools, yet gender division of labour between boys and girls in the region continue to be a challenge.

3.7 The findings and validity

Triangulation was employed to increase the credibility and accuracy of the data collected for the study through multiple methods as explained by Rossman and Rallis (1998) and Creswell (2003). Following Creswell (2003), the methods used to collect data included individual interviews, observation, focus group discussion and existing documents on gender. In addition, to ensure the reliability and validity of the study I explained my main finding for the study and the various methods I used to collect the primary data for this work.

3.8 Limitations of the study

In an effort to come out with this piece of work a number of problems were encountered. Efforts were made to overcome some of the problems to provide for the successful collection of the data. One of the problems was a lack of accessible roads to the villages. The period of this research coincided with the rainy season. With the heavy tropical rains, the roads were very slippery. Using a bike was not very convenient but there was no option as the roads were also narrow. There were some places where I had to trek long distances as even a bike could not help. Another problem was that of the parents not keeping to their time. I visited some parents three to four times before I could conduct the interviews.

Another challenge was how to win the confidence of the children. In the beginning, the children thought it was an examination and so were unwilling to participate. When I explained the reasons for my interview or research to them that it is not an examination but a part of my school work, a few became relaxed and happy, such that they talked very freely. In one instance, after interviewing the selected pupils, others became interested and opted to be interviewed. Some were moving after me to also interview them and held me hostage to interview them. This made me conduct a very short interview to please them and they were happy.

Another challenge was the lack of official population statistics on the region as those that were found were projections and those of the 1997 census. To obtain a map of the region was a big challenge. The Metta Cultural and development Association (MECUDA) head office in Mbengwi was one of the first places I expected to get the map of Metta and that of Medig. My greatest disappointment was when I could not get the map or the population data for Metta and that of Medig from there. I was sent to check from the Mbengwi Rural Council (MRC). At the Council, what was available was only the Map of Mbengwi central and not the Metta area. Then I was sent to the divisional delegation of land and survey in Mbengwi, where only a map of Mbengwi was found.

Finally, very little has been written on gender in the study region. Local references were virtually absent. What was found were unpublished dissertations.

4 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter three discussed the research strategy and methods used. In this chapter, the general findings will be presented through a description and explanation of the information collected from pupils, parents, teachers and the focus group. The interpretation and presentation of this finding will be guided by two theories; Marlow's theory and the feminist theory. Marlow's theory is used to give the various developmental stages that guide the growth and the development of the child physical and psychologically within the family and the society. The feminist theories help to explain some of the reasons that trigger gender division of labour and the approaches to address the situation. This study has discussed four different feminist theories but the study will lean towards the Liberal feminist and Socialist feminist theories.

The objective here is to show the relationship that exists between gender division of labour and children's education in the Medig valley region of the North West province of Cameroon. The relevance of the analyses to the study is for the voice of the inhabitants of the area under study to be heard. This implies that the data is from primary sources and from those who on daily bases experience gender division of labour. Though in the course of the interview informants gave a lot of information, the focus of the discussion below is on what is relevant to the research questions.

I will like to also mention that, not all the questions that were asked are considered for analyses. Some questions were a way to open up a discussion and some of the questions would be combinable analysed to avoid repetitions.

4.2 Expectations and attitudes

Pupils interviewed for this work admitted that they do not attend school frequently, and that they also go to school late sometimes. Of the female children who admitted to absenteeism, three said they care for their junior siblings and assist their parents on the farm and in the market. One said she is absent because of school fees. Two boys said they are sometimes late for school, while two said they usually get to in time. The above admission from the girls confirm Nsamenang's observation that

the extent of child-to-child caretaking and the socialization of children by other children in Cameroon is substantial- far more extensive and perhaps developmentally more critical than direct maternal or parental care (Nsamenang 2000:1).

The above statements show how children have been integrated into their siblings' upbringing and growth as a means of assisting the parents to facilitate their daily activities. Children tend to learn more and spend more time with their brothers and sisters than with the parents (ibid). The parents' expectations that children have the responsibility to assist in caring for their younger ones continue to retard the children's social life and education, as some of the children have to be absent from school to care for their siblings and to assist in other family activities. Interviews from the pupils revealed that some boys actually part take in the care of their young siblings. This corroborates the observation of Nsamenang (1992a) cited in Nsamenang (2000) that boys and girls in Nso Cameroon participate in the care of their young siblings, revealing that "67.2% and 65.2%" of boys and girls respectively participate in taking care of their younger siblings (ibid:9). This is an indication that more girls are still into child caring than boys. Though, a percentage of boys also take care of their younger ones, this is usually in homes where a boy is the eldest child. The responsibility is then shifted to the eldest boy in the home.

Parents are responsible for the absence of their children from school. The interviews of the pupils indicate a distinctive difference in their absence and lateness to school. Girls are the most affected as they were found to be mostly late for school. The cultural biases of parents influence the kind of work they assign to the girl, which may look easy but is time consuming and result in lateness or absence.

Children are socialised into activities that are more in the interest of the family, rather than activities that will be of immediate benefit to the children and the family and the society in the future. When children are absent from school to assist the parents they miss critical school/classroom work. Eventually, this affects their understanding of lessons taught and the importance they attach to education. Epstein (1995) asserts that, the ways parents relate with their children at home determine their educational level and the expectations they have for the children. Thus, he describes the various ways through which the child relates such as communication, learning and expression.

Communication concerns what the parents tell the children, and how cordial the relationship between the parents and the children is; learning includes what the child learns from the parents, and how and what the parents like them to learn and how what has been learned needs to be implemented or practiced; and expression refers to the way parents express themselves to children and how children are also allowed to express themselves (Epstein 1995). This is to confirm the binding links children have with their parents and how children learn from the parents' reactions and their daily activities. This also implies the role of the parents has a far reaching effect on the child not only as a parent but as the children's very first teacher and provider. As stated by Winegar and Valsiner (1992), parents and the family remain the child's first experience where learning at all levels begin and is embedded in the child as he/she grows into an adult, indicating the role of the family is very essential for the development and growth of the child as he/she becomes socialised into the societal norms which in effect guides the children.

Similarly, Ginsburg and Baker (1987) view the way parents react to achievement to be important in the child's education and development within the society that surrounds the upbringing of the child. They identify parents to be an encouraging and motivating force behind the success of the children in the way they assign work to them and the priority they give to the gender. This, therefore, means that the way the parents assign home responsibilities to children has an effect on the children because the children cannot argue or go against their parents. They are bound to accept and work according to their parents' wishes. In a nutshell, children are to be guided by the parents and parents on the other hand should also be a model to their children to portray an encouraging and motivating force to the children. Maslow's theory of motivation indicates that when individual needs are provided for and individuals are motivated, there is a higher tendency of growth and development Maslow (1968) cited in Biehler and Snowman (1986).

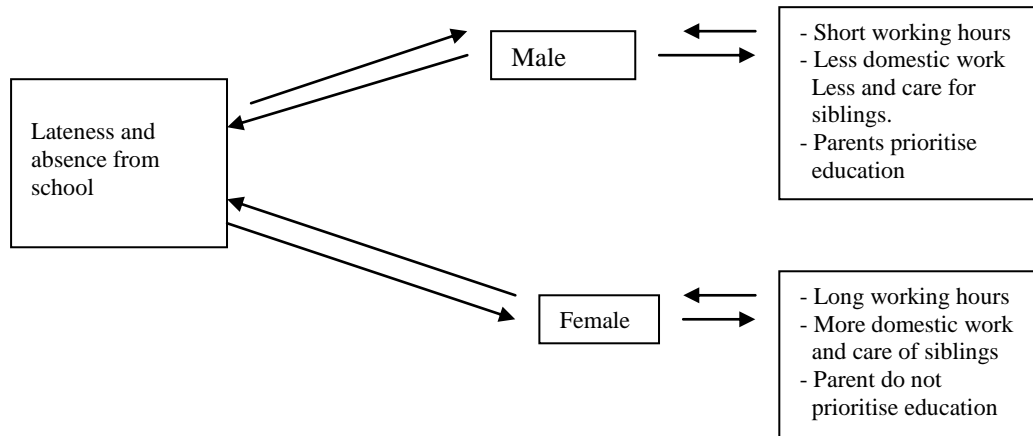
4.3 Work type and the effect on children education

Information collected from parents, teachers and the pupils revealed that both genders work before and after school, but the difference was seen in the kind of work they carry out. Girls were more located in household activities like cooking, caring for siblings and boys mostly fetched water, split wood and cut grass for domestic

animals, while both assisted on the farm. All were indicative of the challenges of gender division of labour that children face. The consequence is the inability of children to meet up with school time.

From the individual interviews I noticed that though boys and girls work, their contribution to the labour demands differ, as well as the ways in which their education is affected. From the illustration below, the work boys do seem hard, but is less time consuming compared to the girls. The girls are occupied with household chores which look easy but consume a lot of time. In addition to girls been absent and going late to school, all the girls interviewed said that they are not able to do assignments at home as a result of the domestic workload. Two of them said they assist in cooking the evening dinner and at times prepare the evening dinner by themselves in the absence of their mothers. Two girls said when their mother has an evening group meeting, they are the ones who have to prepare the dinner for the home. The figure 4.1 explains why boys and girls are late or/and absent from school.

Fig 4.1 Reasons for lateness and absence



The differences in work type is evidenced in the responses obtained from the pupils.

Before I go to school in the morning I have to clean the kitchen, fetch water, clean plates, arrange fire and heat the food we all have to eat before going to school. When the food is heated, I serve each of my younger ones (Interview, female pupil Medig 2008)

This female pupil's response can be compared with a male pupil who said, "in the morning before I go to school I sweep the surrounding, fetch water, wash my legs, face hands and go for my food." (Interview, male pupil Medig 2008)

The comments of the two children, reveal that the girl has more to do in the morning before she prepares for school. It can also be noticed that the boy child finishes his work, takes a bath and eats before the girl child and subsequently will leave for school before her. This, therefore, signifies that the work the children do in the morning determines when they would get to school. In another interview, a female pupil said that;

My mother heats the food we have to eat and I sweep the kitchen, clean plates and fetch water. At times, when I return from school I like to fetch water, clean plates and pots so as to reduce my morning work and go to school early. (female pupil, Medig 2008)

A male child described his duties as;

I take food to the pigs and tie the goats to their tether. On returning home, I wash my face and my legs and only need to put on my uniform eat and take off for school. (male pupil Medig 2008)

Information from the two children show the different duties they have before they go to school. A look at the work type and the time the children have to prepare for school answers the question as to whether both children can get to school at the same time or at different times. One girl gave this reason for not being able to study in the evening:

when I return from school I have to clean the kitchen, make fire and heat water for my parents and my junior ones and sometimes I have to go and meet my mother to help bring things from the farm, after which we have to prepare the evening meal for the family. By the time we finish cooking and eating I already feel sleepy and I cannot read or do my assignment. I will only struggle to do my assignment when I get back to school the following day in order not to be beaten by my teacher. (Interview, female pupil, Medig 2008)

In contrast, a boy described his work schedule as;

When I return from school I sometimes fetch wood and drinking water for the house after that, I fetch water to shower. (Interview, male pupil, Medig 2008)

Interview with the two children above revealed the kind of work they both perform as they return from school. Looking at the structure and the nature of work of these children, it can be noticed that the girl child is involved in more house work than the boy. From the above information one is tempted to say that parents are more lenient with the boys and too strict on the female. This can explain why the girl child is assigned more house responsibility than the female child.

The domestic obligations of girls affect their studies in a way that they cannot read after school and are unable to do their assignments. They have the responsibility to assist the mothers as they both prepare meals for the family, an activity that is considered a female responsibility in this culture. The parents consider it not only as the duty of the girl child to assist her mother while she is cooking, but also a mother-to-daughter grooming moment. It will be easier for the mother to assign certain responsibilities to the daughter when she has other commitments because of which she might not be able to carry out her responsibilities to the family. At such moments, the daughter is expected to step into her mother's shoes and fulfill such responsibilities as cooking. In this way her education is affected as she works till late, gets tired and the following morning. For fear of being beaten by the teacher, some resort to copying answers from those who have done the assignment. In most cases, copying from friends does not help the child to understand what was given in the assignment which can subsequently affect her in the exams if such topics are covered in an exam.

This demand goes beyond the normal classroom duty of a teacher as it is the means through which some teachers evaluate the understanding of a new topic or subject taught to the pupils. In a study carried out by Wolf (1966) cited in Bloom (1981) the following were arrived at: that parents should have detailed knowledge of what the child is learning in school, know his/her strength and weaknesses in studying and give the child help on learning problems when necessary. The parents whose children were considered in this study may not have acquired the standards to give special support to the children as in the foregoing view. This aside, children need support out of the classroom and sufficient time to practice what was studied in school during the

day and also prepare for the following day's lessons. The importance of homework cannot be over emphasised. William(1988) cited in Frith (1988), observes that home work develops childrens' skills on self management, provide time and opprotunity for the reinforcement and work done in class as well as for wider reading and support. Some children despite this, do little beyond what is done in class, and usually fail to do their home work. This situation stems from domestic work overload.

Boocock (1986) analyzes low performance of girls resulting from parents' low expections of the success of their daughters than sons which encourages more boys to work harder than girls who are grow up to believe that education is meant for boys. The effect of the negative impression parents have about girls discourages them from any success. This can be seen even in the kind of jobs parents aspire for their children. Consequently, boys tend to see and consider themselves superior to girls and girls on the other hand, having the impression that boys are more inteligent than them, concentrate less on learning.

My mother stops me from school when she has to be away from home for a funeral, she stops me from going to school to stay home and take care of my junior brother. I only go to school the day she is back.(Interview, girl, Medig 2008).

The statement of the girl above shows how the girl automatically assumes the responsibilities of the mother in her absence. This makes her to be absent from school to take care of her younger siblings and to prepare food for the family. When she is absent from school for one or two days she already misses lessons and the next time she goes to school it becomes difficult for her to catch up with the new lessons as there is no review of the previous classes she has been absent from. This supports the argument of Serpell (1993:6) cited in Nsamenang,(2000) that "frequently the demand on children's labour does not mesh well with schooling based on European timetable" To explain this, Nsamenang (1992c:6) cited in Nsamenang (2000) notes that the "main reason for this is that girls bear a heavier burden of both the household activities and the care of siblings than boys". Clearly, two competing, essential needs have created friction between the demand for schooling and the demand for the labour of the child as a means of family survival (Nsamenang, 2000).

The story of the above girl is no different from a personal observation made during the field work. A girl was sent away from school because she showed up with her junior brother who had been entrusted into her care.

Fig 4:2 Girl returning home with her brother



Source: Fielwork, 2008

As young as she is, the girl has been assigned the responsibility of caring for her brother by her mother so as to facilitate her mother's daily activities. Breaching school regulation, she was sent back home.

The child is not aware of what she loses in her absence from school and is moving back home with no problem. She will not be refused even if the mother assigns her to the same duty the following day. It is the responsibility of the parent to get her to understand why it is important to be present in school and the consequences of being absent from school. But in this case, the parent's actions diminish any importance attached to school. A child cannot pursue educational goals at the expense of family demands. This comes out loudly in the dilemma a primary school pupil has to face each morning:

My father is a tapper and before I go to school, I have to wait for my father to bring the palm wine I take to my father's customer who is a palm wine seller. When he does not come in time from tapping, I have to wait because I will be afraid to come home in the afternoon for fear that my father will beat me for not waiting to take the palm wine to the seller. (Interview, male pupil, Medig 2008)

Information collected from the boy also revealed how he has to obey the parents even if he will be beaten in school for being late. This shows that there are days the child can be in school on time and there are days he will be late for school, depending on the time his father brings the palm wine. Being a child, and his father being the patriarch head, the boy has to obey and not question his father on days his father comes home late with the palm wine. The palm wine serves as a source of income to the family. It is also from this that the boy's school needs can be funded. Since children are taken care of, and provided for by their parents they are obliged to work according to their parents demand and satisfaction. This goes to support the view of Rudduck (2004) that parents consider and see children as their means of assistance. In this case, the parents decide on what they want the children to do, which they believe is in their interest and in the interest of the children.

4.4 Teachers' views on gender division of labour

The general understanding gathered from discussions with the teachers was that boys are more participatory than girls during class lessons. Girls were also more likely to sleep in class than boys. This gives the impression that differences in their activities does not provide enough resting time for the girls as much as the boys such that when they arrived school in the morning they feel tired.

Because children have their various home duties, lateness to school has been one of the difficult challenges to deal with. Some children, when they are late for school you find them hiding outside, while some come to class.

Usually this distracts other children when teaching. (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

The above comment confirmed that children have to work before attending classes. As a result, some arrive late for classes. While some come straight to class, others stay out because they are afraid of being beaten. The teacher's point is to the fact that when children come late to class they distract the attention of those already in class and the teaching. This, in a way, affects not only the child that is late but also those that are already in class and even the effectiveness of teaching and evaluation. According to one teacher,

some children absent themselves from school during the period of sequence evaluation and this gives too much work to the teacher as it becomes difficult to evaluate a single child or the children who were absent from school on that day. Compounded with the absences is the fact that it also becomes difficult to evaluate the problem of the children during examinations. (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

The teacher above is of the opinion that pupils' irregular attendance affect their teaching and evaluation of the children. The teachers consider an evaluation of the children based on the understanding of the subject. It is challenging to evaluate how children get to understand what they teach and also difficult to assess pedagogical strategies. If assignments are not done, the teacher finds it difficult to evaluate the children. And when tests and exercises are conducted, it becomes difficult to point out the weakness of children because it is hard to determine whether the child's low performance is a sign of weaknesses in teaching methods or it is a direct consequence of absenteeism.

The teachers placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of parents.

On market days some parents withdraw their children to the market without the knowledge of the teacher or the headteacher. Mostly mothers who sell food in the market withdraw their female children to assist them in washing plates and fetching water. (Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008)

From the statement of the teacher above, she is of the opinion that, parents absent children on market days especially those mothers who sell cooked food in the market. The view of the above teacher shows that, some female children are stopped from attending school on market days by their mothers to facilitate their selling by cleaning used plates and fetching water for customers to drink.

Some parents overload their children with work at home and don't encourage them to study at home. The girl child especially is assigned a lot of house duties. For example, girls help their mothers to make food and fetch water and some have to meet their mothers after school on their farms to carry foodstuffs home. The children are left to learn only from the teachers in school. (Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008)

Most of the home work given to children is not done because children are left loose by their parents and sometimes overload them with work. Besides parents do not provide time for the children to study at home they are only interested in the assistance the children render to them.(Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008)

The above teachers seek to show that parents have pushed the responsibility of educating the children to the teachers alone. The teacher explains that because parents give children too much work back home, the children are unable to have their assignments from school done before the next school day. The teachers want parents to also be part of the education of the children so that assignments and other school work the children have to do could be done before the child's next class.

Some parents do not encourage children to learn at home and to be in school early enough for classes and some keep children home on certain days to assist them without informing the teacher or the headteacher.(Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008).

This poses a problem to the teachers because they are not aware of why children are absent from school. Besides, there are no communication links between parent and teachers on such matters. The teachers further revealed that when children are absent from school without the knowledge of the teacher, the child is the one who faces the consequences and not the parents. Some of the teachers said they often beat the children the next time they show up for class, because the teachers expect the child to give tangible reasons for their absence from school.

Similarly, gender division of labour among the children as revealed by the teachers shows that girls are involved in most household activities than boys and as a result when they get to school, because of the tiredness resulting from the work load they perform before leaving for school, they sleep in class.

In the class especially when I am teaching the girls usually sleep which is an indication of tiredness due to the work they had done at home before attending classes.

(Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

When they are found sleeping in class they are punished by the teacher or asked to stand up. This disturbs teaching as the attention of the class is diverted towards the

sleeping girl, which often creates a situation of laughter and mockery. Although the teacher's response is well intentioned (to prevent the girl from further sleeping) his actions go to affect the child's self esteem and discourages them from being interested in schooling. It is a widespread practise which other teachers admit to. In the words of one of teacher, "when they are asked to stand to prevent them from sleeping, they get ashamed and unhappy." (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

Absenteeism and late coming to school is a problem in the rural area.

You find children coming late and absence are on a regular basis here, compare to my experince as a teacher in the urban area.

(Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

It is tempting for such rural urban comparisons to be made. But the socio-economic conditions that exist in these two places are vastly different even though it is the same country. The rural poor are subsistent farmers whose livelihoods depend on the labour assistance from their children and they have traditional beliefs and practices which are hard to break away from. In contrast, urban parents who have adopted western lifestyles are civil servants or business people whose income generation do not depend on their children. They are able to educatede their children without involving the children in their businesses. As such, urban children have enough time to study after school and sometimes have teachers who provide extra tuition after school.

4.5 Teachers views on the impact of gender division of labour

As already mentioned, lateness and absenteeism of pupils are some of the major challenges within the area. When children are absent from school, they are denied the chance to learn. There is no continuity in the teaching and learning processes, which leads to poor academic performance and all this have to do with the work the children have before and after school.

The boys have the tendency to do well in school because they have more time to study at home than the girls. And parents motivate boys by words or by giving them time to study. While the girls will not often have enough time as they assist the mothers a lot in cooking and child care. Some girls, find it difficult to follow lessons... sometimes their minds are focused on the work they have to do at home after school. (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

The statement of the teacher above shows that, the results of the boys can be different from that of the female. As a result, boys might have some time to study back home as compared to the girls. Thoughts about the work the children have after school make them loose focus in class. They are deprived of class lessons because they are thinking about their domestic obligations.

The girl child in particular does not concentrate well in class and so focuses more on the work she has at home instead of concentrating on what is going on in class. She is reflecting on how she is going to do her work when school closes. This affects her mental development in terms of her abilities to follow class lessons, compelling her into less understanding of the need and the importance to concentrate on learning. Subsequently, she is unable to make progress in her education and that leads to being unable to influence her own social or/and economic development. Socialist feminists advocates point out that it is only through education that there can be a change in power relation among the gender (Brock-Utne 1989). Girls and women have been pushed into domestic work as their main responsibility while men get into paid work and are considered the only bread winners of the family. This continues to show why the Socialist feminist theorists push for women/girls to have equal education, which they believe will facilitate the liberation of women/girls from dominant patriarchy role (Odora 1993).

Commenting on the impact on the differences in treatment given to the different gender, one teacher explained that as a result of gender division of labour

boys tend to be proud and think of themselves as superior and tend to be relaxed at housework while girls tend to be lazy and feel inferior to boys and thus shy away from practical and highly demanding subjects like mathematics. (Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008).

Gender division in the situation as explained by teacher above shows that, due to gender division of labour boys' think and feel confident about themselves and they look down on certain house chores which are reserved for girls. This has affected the girls as they feel inferior. Mannathoko (1992) analyzes the structural relations between the genders in which he concludes that power and family control has been

pushed to the man. Men dominate as they consider themselves superior to the women according to the societal norms. Children observe and imitate their parents. The teacher's comment above confirms how boys grow up to be self confident and girls to be timid as a result of how they are socialised. The effect is seen in the classroom.

The boys tend to score higher in class and participate in class lessons and are able to speak when questions are asked in class. While the girls always shy away from talking among their peers and are always afraid and feel they will be laughed at when she speaks. The girls usually do not participate much when a question is asked. Because of this the girls always feel defeated by the boys and participate little in most class lessons. (Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008).

Boys carry the attitude of not assisting their mothers in the kitchen to school and do not pay attention to home economics lessons. Few boys in my class who had taken the subject wrote the final exams, the First School Leaving Certificate... because the girls and other boys who are not doing the course laugh at them for cooking and this discourages the boys. All the girls liked the course as it deals with cooking and dressmaking and most of them perform well and participate during the lesson.

(Interview, female teacher, Medig 2008).

This goes to show how the girls are more knowledgeable with household work as evidence from their interest and active participation in home economics that is related to their field of work at home. Since it is what they often practice as they assist their mothers at home, it gives them the confidence and zeal to talk as what they have mastery in. They are more animated and express their skills in subjects which continue to place them in the feminine activities as boys scare away from it to masculine work or activities. This goes to confirm the conversational myth that the woman's place is in the kitchen (Martin and Roberts cited in Charles 1993 and Moser, 1993). This affects the girls' education as they become more interested in subjects that continue to keep them to the mother role and are less interested in subjects that will provide them opportunities to compete with the boys.

Similarly, Datta (1994) identifies the family, social and economic response to the children as having an influence on their educational pursuits. It further underlines that what the family transmits to the children is important as it determines the children's

development and interest into their different fields of studies. Datta's concern is to emphasize the important role parents have in the children's mind building and focus in life, which comes from their activities and interactions with the children. In cases where parents are biased in the education of their children and tend to think that some children are supposed to be of certain standards in the family rather than others, the children respond by gravitating towards their parents expectations. The children may end up taking more interest in education and less household activities and vice versa.

Burton (1988) who also points out that parents influence their in the way they bring them up. Parents' occupational aspirations for their children go to influence the children's education and interest. As a consequence, the differences in performance is subject to the desire of the parents. Plan (2007) confirms this in an analysis of African rural homes where girls are faced with abuse and violence at home. The girl child is socialised to understand that she and the boy are not of the same status. This has contributed to make boys feel superior and girls inferior.

In the distribution of work in school, boys are usually assigned to difficult tasks and girls to less tedious task. This has made the boys more creative than the girls which can be seen during hand work presentation in school. Boys come up with a variety of hand work which range from locally constructed chairs, cupboard, open boat bamboo cars and houses constructed from local bamboo, while girls will bring sweeping brooms, marked back races, and some baskets. They are graded as a means to motivate and encourage the children into more creative work. (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008).

This shows how gender division of labour directly and indirectly continues to place the girl and the boy child into a particular trend of activities and skills as an indication of what the children learn and experience as they grow and become socialised into the society. These skills that they develop is as a result of their daily experience as noted by Cranny-Francis (2003) that gender is everywhere and manifest consciously or unconsciously in our daily language, postal directives and the media. It can, therefore, be said that gender division of labour has continued to place girls and boys into activities that confirm different roles of gender not only in the society but also in their role models as a function of what is seen and imitated. Whatever the stand point, the

trend of gender division continues to circle around girls and boys who are considered as efficient in particular work types. Information from the above teacher gives a picture of gender division of labour being practiced in school as a continuation of the image society has already created between the children, thus, perpetuating a divide of power and roles between the children as they grow up.

The way gender division of labour has been structured in the society has also influenced the way work is also shared in schools on manual work days. On these days girls are asked to bring hoes while boys bring cutlasses. Girls will either have to clean around the school campus, till ridges in the garden or weed in the garden while the boys cut sticks to stake the yams and beans or clear the school field and around. (Interview, male teacher, Medig 2008)

These differences in work type allocated to the children even at school show shows how gender division of labour does not end only at the level of the family or the society but is also practiced in school as a continuation of the societal belief. This is considered an important element of the cultural heritage in rural Medig, whereby children are expected to assist their parents in their activities and consequently acquire, maintain and pass it on to others.

4.6 Parental perception of gender division of labour

Parents' opinions as to the reason for the gender division of labour between the children in Medig vary. Interview with a pastor,

Gender division did not start recently. Before the coming of Basel mission and the English primary schools in Meta; children were to learn from their different parents in that parents undertook the education of the children informally. Women were to take their daughters to the farm and teach them how to till the soil and grow crops. Girls also learned how to prepare food, make clay pots that were used in cooking, weave baskets that were used to serve dry food and care for their siblings. Boys learnt from their fathers how to climb palm tress, tap palm wine, hunt, cut grass to roof houses and building houses. Through this, children get to learn how to be independent and more integrated into activities of their different parents. (Interview, Parent pastor, Medig 2008).

The interview with this pastor shows that, gender division of labour has existed throughout the history of the Medig society. This is seen in the way the line of activities and work were shared between men and women. Women and girls have been responsible for the home, food provision to the entire family and men/boys have been engaged in activities that are seen as hard and income generating. The above interview further revealed that there was informal learning through which children were to learn from their respective parents what is required of them. To them it was easier for children to integrate in their various fields as a result of the gender demarcation that children grow to see. Thus, children grow and develop more skills and creative knowledge that continue to place them into different gender roles within the society and their families.

The theoretical anchor of the above point of view also reveals that “when men, women and children worked together for family subsistence, family members were close to each other and children had a clear picture of their parents’ lives. Traditional education kept children in contact with parents, their social context and the activities of their daily life, permitting them to learn from their parents and interacts on how to develop an identity as a husband/father or wife/mother” (Encyclopedie de la Republique unie du Cameroon, 1981 cited in Nsamenang 2000:5).

In my opinion, gender division of labour makes work easy as girls will be good in house work and child care which will place them in a good position in their marital homes and the boys will also grow to understand that they have to work hard to be able to support their family and children. Traditionally, boys’ contribution to the family is seen differently from that of the girl. But this does not change the fact that men remain the head in our society. That is why we put more pressure on our sons than the female to work hard. (Interview, parent farmer, Medig 2008)

In the farmers view above, household work is suitable for the girls as they are seen as those to keep the home neat and provide food for the family. The farmers view is based on the fact that gender division of labour exist to give the different genders an understanding of their different roles in the family and in the society. From the above statement, I could say that the farmer’s ideas are still based on the grounds that girls should be educated informally as a way to socialise them in a mother’s role, which is

discriminatory and places them in a less privilege position in the society. This is in line with Liberal feminist analyses of the sexual division of labour where tradition continues to place women and girls in the mother's role as a function of their responsibility in domestic work. It "consists of endless rounds of mindless, demanding and undervalued tasks" Odora (1993:34) while men are involved in jobs or activities that give them greater control, freedom and more financial power against the women (ibid). The liberal feminists focus on the oppressive role of women/girls and demand for increase in opportunity and equality for women/girls as a means to break the barriers of the social inequality that exists between the men and women so that they too can speak and act on their own behalf (Acker 1987).

In the view of the Liberal feminists, women are located not only differently in the society but unequally (Mannathoko 1992). Reflecting on the comment of the above farmer highlights the location of girls and boys differently and unequally. Evidently, society sees their contribution to their work and position in the family differently. According to Marxist feminists, the solution to this can be found in economic empowerment. Though Marxist feminists have been criticised for neglecting the political aspect of the woman's life, both theories aim at the same goal; bringing parity to gender. Liberal feminists are criticized for not giving a definite critic to the power relation and the patriarchy role between the genders, they are still of the opinion that the class location of women and men should be dismantled such that women can have positions and power to make decisions regarding their lives (Meena, 1992). This can only be done through increased investment in education as a means to empower women/girls. Obviously, the views of parents in Medig, the practices in and outside school do not help to bridge the gap between boys and girls. A retired parent observed that

boys were to attend school to be teachers and catechists in church congregations and the few girls that were allowed in school at that time were those girls who were to be wives of teachers and catechist. The school was not popular among the indigenes because most parents did not see the importance of female education and it was difficult for them to accept girls being educated from school rather than by their mothers. (Interview, Parent retired worker, Medig 2008).

Today, most of the roles are still implemented because families and societies circles continue to reflect on how things have been in the past. The interview with this parent shows a history of gender biases in the division of labour and education of the children as a cause for the continued gender differences in Meta. A look at the view of this parent gives the notion that gender has been socially constructed, which has gone to shape the behaviour and attitude of the parents towards assigning roles to their children. The argument against the above is put forward by Acker (1987) that the stereotyping ideology of girls being socialised into traditionally constructed myth of being responsible for household activities, contribute to limit them within a particular gender role and widen inequality gap between the genders. And this socialization of women and girls through the family, school and media has continued to place women in an inferior position and make them lose confidence of even a higher aspiration in life.

Though gender division of labour is something we grew up to see and get socialised into, there are no doubts that there are activities that we feel can best be performed by the respective genders. Like cooking. Some boys can cook, but I do not think they will be as efficient as girls. Like clearing weeds. I don't think the female can do more than the male. These are some of the things we can see the strengths and the weaknesses you can find between boys and girls. Some things will be done better by the sex we feel is best suited for it. This is why we continue to train our children into the respective gender fields. It will guide them in future. (Interview, parent business woman, Medig 2008).

The parent above upholds the ideas of gender division of labour as a way through which the parents guide the child into his/her future career, without considering the changes and the demands of contemporary. This shows how certain activities, according to the parent, pertain to a particular sex, leading to the conclusion that gender division of labour is a strong phenomenon considered among parents in the upbringing of their children and a way for the children to get a mastery of the different gender roles.

With the rate of unemployment it is necessary for children to get more knowledge and ideas of the different activities within their environment for them to be able to face the challenges in future. There is western education, but it is also necessary for us to teach our children informally the basic activities that we think are important in our

society to avoid the complete eradication of our cultural heritage among our children and the generation to come. (Interview, Parent female a retired nurse, Medig 2008).

Interview with this parent shows that children automatically form part of the family labour force. There is no specific age for inclusion into the family labour force as children have different ages of attaining physical maturity for home activities. In this sense, almost every child undergoes or practices and participates in all home activities or work as a means to facilitate the smooth running of the home. The parents claim children form part of the family work force in different activities and these activities depict a high magnitude of the gender division of labour in the area.

However, concerning the existing practice of gender division of labour in Medig, it was also realised that children involvement in these activities was as a result of the social and economic situation of the family. In this region agriculture is the main economic activity with a small percentage of the people engaged in white-collar jobs. Even those involved in white-collar jobs also engage in some sort of agriculture to supplement their income. Alongside agriculture, the people also engage in other activities such as artefact-making (weavers and blacksmiths), quarrying and traditional medical practices. Parents' quest for gender division of labour between their children as revealed by some respondents can be summarised as a consequence of the quest for food security in the family, cultural socialisation, lack of agricultural mechanization and lack of money to hire labour.

Interviews with some of the parents show their interest and preference for their children to be in school. But the challenges they faced affect their ability to meet all the educational needs of their children. Thus, children's labour are exploited as much as possible so that besides the demand for food that is needed for the household, parents will be able to have time for other activities that can generate income for the family.

Focus group discussion with the parents revealed that, children remain their main source of labour within the community. Children's participation in household work is crucial for the family, besides their going to school, as they assist in caring for their younger ones, fetch water, fetch wood, clean the home, clean plates facilitates the

parents activities as they return home from their daily activities. This was an indication that gender division of labour facilitates the parents' activities out of the home. In addition, the children will be able to work in times of difficulties and rely less on white-collar jobs as the only source of income. They emphasised that because of their economic situation children's contribution remain vital for the daily functioning of the family. Children's labour is needed not only in household but in other activities of the household as farming and in the market to generate income and food to meet household demands for food and health which are unpredictable. The household combination of children in labour activities facilitate home and out of home work. Because their support is crucial for the household and the family in general, it becomes difficult to work without their assistance.

4.7 Obseravtions on a market day

Market days were very busy days for the villagers as this is the day when they easily get money in exchange for their good. Traders come from far off to buy from the locals and parents use all the means at their disposal to prepare their market goods with the help of the children. On this day, children assist the parents to carrying some of the goods to be sold to the market. If the market day happens to be a school day some children will either be late for school or be absent from school to assist their parents to carry things to the market. What was interesting was the fact that children do all this activities in their school uniform which show some prepareness for school. They wear their uniforms and carry their books so that there will be no need to go back home to change or to get their books before going to school. They go to school directly they are finished assisting their parents to take goods to the market.

4.8 Efforts of the delegation of basic education

Interview with the inspector at the Ministry of Basic Education in Mbengwi, the divisional headquarters of the study area, revealed that there is nothing put in place to mitigate the specific effects of gender division of labour on children's education in the study region. Though there were no specific programmes aimed at addressing gender division of labour or ways to ensure that it does not affect education, other programmes that aim at improving education seem to be alleviating the situation somehow. The provision of aid to children by Plan Cameroon has motivated parents to send their children to school. The creation of foster parents that assist the children

in their educational needs and into higher learning institutions has also influenced parents' decision on the education of their children, especially the girls who are Plan Cameroon's target group (Field information from plan worker in Mbengwi.)

According to the inspector, the government is working to meet the demand for teachers within divisions where there are insufficient teachers. This is also still largely supported by Plan as government still cannot meet the required number of teachers. Girl education is encouraged only at the higher level by the government through a few scholarships. Interview with a female Inspector of Basic Education confirmed the fact that gender division of labour does exist but because the government has not put anything in place she would not be able to elaborate much on that. She knows girls are lagging behind compared to the boys as a result of the work load the girls have, especially, in the rural areas. From the general result of First School Leaving Certificate (FLC), Common Entrance General Examination (CEGE) and Cameroon Entrance of Technical Examination (CETE) many girls are not successful, thus revealing that girls' education is retarded by the nature of their work type. Interestingly, those who succeed end up doing better than the boys, therefore, indicating that if girls are given the opportunity and their work load is reduced, there is the possibility for improved performance.

4.9 Summary

Firstly, considering the anchor point of the above findings, it was realised that, most of the children in this area (boys and girls) who were interviewed form part of the rural household labour force.

Secondly responses from the informants show that the causes of gender division of labour are to get the children trained, traditional socialization of the children, quest for food security, lack of farm mechanization as well as insufficient income to hire labour.

Thirdly, parents perceive gender division of labour as a normal socialization process. Gender roles are perceived as a great traditional heritage of the people, which they believe have to be passed on to their children at all cost to ensure continuity. Essentially parents see nothing wrong with the consequence of the gender division of

labour for education, but rather consider it as a normal socialization process, which every child must undergo.

The main impact of gender division of labour on the children's education is lateness, absenteeism. The cumulative effect of lateness and absenteeism has often been poor academic performance which also leads to repetition of pupils as expressed by some of the teachers.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate how gender division of labour between some primary school boys and girls affect their education in Medig in Cameroon. Guided by Maslow's theory of motivation and selected feminists theories, the study focuses on the different work types allocated to the boys and girls within the study region. Marlow's theory, as earlier mentioned, was used to show the various conditions under which children development in and out of school contribute to the child's well-being and success in education. Liberal feminist theory and the socialist feminist theory explained the reasons behind gender division of labour. The discussion summarises the attitudes, perception of parents, teachers and pupils in rural on gender division of labour on their education. This chapter gives a recap of the findings from data collected and presented in the previous chapter.

5.2 Pupils perception of gender division of labour

Both boys and girls are involved in different activities within the home. In interviews with them, both sexes confirmed they are aware of their home duties even in the absence of the parents. This implies the children are not only aware of their different home duties but are also conscious of what the parents expects from them before they go to school and when they return. The children explained that when they wake up early to perform their household duties like fetching water, cleaning plates, sweeping the surrounding, they get tired when they get to school. Some of the girls said that their parents at times absent them from school to care for their siblings especially during farming seasons. The children explained that, when they absent from or are late to school, they are punished by the teachers by flogging or some other manual punishment. This goes to affect the child in that while others are learning he/she is out of class carrying out the punishment. Furthermore, when the child is flogged he/she is having pains such that there is no concentration on what is being taught at that moment.

In addition, the pupils confirmed that, they are unable to do assignments given in school due to the workload at home. They are obliged to work after school with no

ample studying time. By the time they finish the home activities they are tired and hungry, and so they wait for their mother to provide their evening meals. Some of the girls said at times they prepare the dinner in the absence of their mother and that when she prepares the dinner and serves to everyone, they start discussing and forget that she has to read. This was also noted by some teachers who revealed that, some of the children loss concentration in class because of the thought of the work they have at home. The above view goes to show how the developmental need as outline by Marlow's theory contributes to the success and growth of the child and the social development of the child.

Discussion with the children also showed that some were not happy working at home in the morning before going to school. There were some who said they always like to do some of the household work in the evening so that they could have very little work to do in the morning so that they can finish in time and to go to school early. However, because there are so many people in the house, when they fetch water and clean all the plates they are re-used in the evening so they have to fetch water and clean the plates all over again.

Observations from the field showed that it was difficult for children to learn late in the night because of the use of lanterns. While on the field it was also observed that when children close from school as there are going home there are discussing what there are going to do when they get home. Those who have to fetch wood start discussing where they are going to fetch the wood, and those who have to laundry also discuss the stream where they are going to do the laundry. Those who are going to meet the parents on the farm and bring food home also tell their friends so that those who have the same direction make their plans to move together. This was usually among children who live in the same quarter. When there return from their various era there have to assist in other home activities, like making sure where their birds sleep has been closed, pack things that were put outside to dry like palm nuts and the chaffs from the palm nuts that is used to light fire. When all this has been done the children have to eat and may be read, while some go to their rooms and start playing.

In addition to that, as previously mentioned, the lack of a reading place at home for the children is another handicap. The lack of electricity in the rural areas makes it

difficult for children to learn at night when they finish their household duties. With the subsistence nature of most rural parents, kerosene which is fuel for local light is considered expensive. Parents ration the use of kerosene such that very few lamps are used at a time. Since the children have household duties after school the children virtually have to read or do their assignment when they are through with the house work. Evening meals are prepared and served when the parents are back home from their daily activities. Children have to wait for their food before they study or go to bed. When the children eat it is late for the children to study and also time for them to go to bed. The foregoing views buttress the fact that, gender division of labour between the children affects the children both at home and school, which subsequently affects the children's future learning. But due to educational level and the economic situation of most of the parents, it is difficult to give a clear cut conclusion because the involvement of the children is not of their liking but because of the circumstances beyond their reach.

5.3 Parents' perception of gender division of labour

Interview with the parents revealed that children are considered as part of their household labour force such that the assistance of children remains in high demand for the household activities and needs. Parents explained that for their daily activities to run properly children have a role in the domestic work. This includes fetching wood which serves as household fuel, fetching water that serves for domestic use to cook and bath, care for their young ones, clean the home, and washing of dresses which is done manually by the children and assist on the farm. This facilitates the parents' work as they get home late, and are already aware of the responsibility the children have as part of their contribution to the daily management of the home. This is in line with Kielland and Tovo (2006) who note that rural African parents find it difficult to do work at home that is meant for children. In other words, the children have as an obligation to perform their duties as they return from school. Thus, it is difficult for most parents to carry out duties which they believe are meant for the children.

Responses from the parents show that gender division of labour is a traditional socialization of children and a great cultural heritage that needs to be passed on from one generation to another. In addition, parents revealed that, children assistance are

needed at home so as to meet their daily activities as poverty makes hiring labour difficult. Parents consider children's assistance as normal socialization the child needs rather than the effect it has on the children's education. Parents consider the going to school as enough learning for their children. This is seen in the way the labour of the children is utilised by most parents before and after school and some parents cause children to be absent from school without informing their teachers and/or head teachers.

The parents revealed that gender division of labour between boys and girls continue to exist because it is considered as grooming for the children to get a mastery of their work type, and that traditionally boys' contribution to the family is seen differently from that of the female. As such, gender division of labour exists to place them in their respective roles in reference to the different family roles they are expected to perform as adults. For example, cooking and taking care of children by females and splitting of wood by males.

Some parents also acknowledged the fact that their level of education does not provide them the opportunity to check their children's books or assist in teaching them at home. They think that when children go to school they get what is required as they are taught by trained teachers. Since children have been in school the whole day studying, they need to assist in household work when they returned. This is why they make use of their labour when they return home.

The parents also revealed that they were not satisfied with the way some of the teachers teach. Reasons were that teachers organise afternoon teaching sessions where children pay for them to teach out of the normal school hours. Parents think that teachers are exploiting and over working the children. They resent it because they have to pay for these extra classes. Besides, they feel that children have to be at home to work to meet the household work demands. The daily tasks of the parents are many and usually they are already prepared for their children's assistance when they return from school.

In addition to the individual interviews with the parents, the focus group discussion showed that children are involved in the household labour activities as a result of their

financial situation. The parents in the focus group discussion explained that, because their livelihood is based on subsistence farming, children are involved into different household labour to support the family so that income can be generated from other sources to supplement the household needs. Producing enough food to satisfy the family nutritional needs is an important reason for the utilisation of every available family labour including the children in order to maximize productivity for household consumption.

5.4 Teachers' perspectives on impact on education

Analysis from this study revealed that, the effect of gender division of labour between the children poses a number of challenges. As noted from the interview with the teachers shown in the previous chapter, absenteeism was one of the problems that some teachers faced. The teachers pointed out that some parents make their children absent in order to assist them at home without the prior knowledge of the teachers or the head teachers. This affects the teaching and learning as those that are absent from school usually are not able to follow up lessons the day they are back in school. In addition, children fear to ask questions where there are doubts because it might be a continuation of what was taught in their absence and so stay in ignorance. Furthermore, when such a child is asked a question in class concerning the previous lesson it becomes difficult to answer and so gives the teacher the impression that what was previously taught was not understood by the pupil. Going back to explain previous lessons to absentee pupils only drag the rest of the class backwards. Teachers explained that late coming to school is against the school rules and regulations. Despite the flogging and punishment that children get as a result, lateness remains a problem to be solved. They further explained that children who arrive at school late often loiter because they are afraid to enter the class.

Children not being able to learn and have their assignments done were attributed to negligence on the part of the parents. The teachers revealed that parents think teachers are responsible for the complete teaching and education of children, such that when the children return from school parents do not see the need for them to study at home. Hence when children return from school, parents utilise their labour intensively without considering that they have to study at home. This is why some teachers said parents overload the children with work after school. Children too, afraid of their

parents find it difficult to tell the parents they have an assignment. In some cases, even if they do tell the parents that they have work, they will tell them they will study after working which they do not do. As such, teachers see it as a weakness on the side of the parents for not providing them with time to study after school hours.

In addition, teachers also revealed that parents do not regularly attend Parent Teacher Association meetings (PTA) that are usually organised by the school to discuss matters in the school. Teachers attribute the negligence of parents not attending the PTA as pushing the full responsibility of the education of the children to the teachers. Teachers noted that, it is usually through PTA meetings that matters of children coming late to school, absence from school and children performance could better be addressed. Through the same forum teachers will be able to point out some of the things that contribute negatively to the children's education. Parents too will also have the opportunity to know the time and the kind of work that is necessary for the children within school days. Parents could be sensitised on the importance of checking their children's books after school and asking the children if they have an assignment to prevent children coming to school without doing their assignments.

5.5 The theories and the findings

The use of the feminist theories and the Maslow theory of motivation in accessing the effect of gender division of labour indicated some important ideas. Though there are arguments put forth by Meena (1992) that feminism is considered a Western affair by Africans, employing the ideas of liberal and the socialist feminist theorist were important to the study of gender division of labour between girls and boys in the study region. The feminist theory provided the framework to analyse how girls and boys are treated differently in society with patriarchy dominating. This explains that boys and girls have different roles and positions in the family. This is also noted by Odora (1993) who points out that, the socialist feminist theory explains how African women are treated in the society.

Given the inevitable beliefs of traditional African societies and the traditional structure of these societies, there are still doubts to give a concluding statement with regards to women/girls and men/boys on gender division of labour. As in Medig parents are of the opinion that, gender division of labour resulted from traditional

beliefs while some considered it a natural phenomena, others see it as resulting from differences in sex. This is also described by Bass (2004) who in his opinion explained that women/girls low wage resulted from work segregation between the genders. This has contributed to give an insignificant value to women work. In addition occupational segregation by gender gives an understanding why children are also involved in different activities in rural African communities.

Maslow's theory of growth and motivation analyses the various developmental stages that cause individuals to act either positively or negatively. Given the situation of gender division of labour between children, this theory shows how the parents and the environment are a strong motivation to the upbringing and the development of the children, irrespective of the sex. When parents discriminate between the kinds of work that is assigned to the different genders, one is tempted to say that it might probably lead to psychological stigma, in that some children are given different treatment within the household causing some to look superior or inferior to others.

Despite the differences in opinion on the causes of gender division of labour, from my own point of view and from the interaction with the informants, I could say that gender division of labour between the genders is considered a natural and socialising phenomenon that needs to be transmitted to their children. I understand the importance of gender division of labour by the parents, as training the children and getting their children used to their different occupations within the household and in future. Along the same line, Kielland & Tovo (2006) explain that gender division of labour brings the children more closely together to their family. The children who do not work are considered poorly brought up for the future. However, given the fact that gender division of labour is inevitable to the livelihood of most rural families, it is also important that, parents try to moderate their one sided view of the genders.

The results of this study imply that apart from gender division of labour between children in household activities, other factors influence the school work and academic performance of the children. In other words, what consistently happen to the a pupil from the end of the school day till when he/she return to school the next morning for lessons, is significantly influential on his/her education.

5.6 Conclusion

From the above discussion of gender division of labour between boys and girls in rural Medig in Cameroon, I found that the effect of gender division of labour on the education of these children portrays both negative and positive impact. Firstly, the positive impact is the satisfaction the parents get from the assistance the children give to them and to the household. Secondly, the socialization parents feel enables their children get to know their different duties within the household, which will be essential for their children's success when they grow up to manage their own homes and pursue their own careers. Thirdly, the parents believe that the informal education the children receive is important for the preservation of traditional cultural values, which must be transmitted from generation to generation.

On the other hand, the negative consequences are due to the fact that gender division of labour has lead to one gender being over burdened with work than the other. This has contributed to lateness and absenteeism particularly with girls as compared to boys. Secondly it has created a situation of one sex feeling superior to the other as a result of the honour, respect and preferences that is given to male children, whereas girls are left feeling inferior and inadequate. It gives a picture of the society that education for girls is not value compared to that of the boys.

Given the current poverty situation of most rural parents, gender division of labour and its effect on the children education in Medig is primarily negative. According to the UN Dakar Framework for Education, every child has the right to quality education. Education can contribute to change the mentalities and belief of societies through the diffusion of modern values in the society. Gender division of labour should thus not be practised to the psychological or educational detriment of children.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW / CHECK LIST

Interview guide for pupils

1. Sex..... Age Class.....school
2. Do you go to school everyday?
3. Do you sometimes absent yourself from school? Why?
4. What kind of work do you carry out before you go to school?
5. Does your morning house work affects the time you arrive in school?
6. What are some of your activities at home when you return from school?
7. Do you have time for studying at home as you return from school?

Interview guide for parents

1. Sex..... Occupation.....
2. Who constitute your household labour force?
3. What contribution do boys and girls render to the family?
4. Does this society practice gender division of labour between the children? Do you think the practice is necessary to the children?
5. What is your perception of gender division of labour between boys and girls within the household?
6. Do you think the division of labour according to the gender has more effect on any of the gender than the other in their education?
7. Do you have something more to say in addition to what we have discussed regarding the practice of gender division of labour in this region between the children?

Interview guide for teachers

1. Sex..... School.....
2. How many children do you have in your class? Boys, girls?
3. Do you think there is gender division of labour between boys and girls in this society?

4. Do you think the gender division of labour between boys and girls affects their education?
5. Do you think parents are assisting to minimise the effect of gender division on the education of their children? Yes/No, if No why?
6. What are some of the challenges of gender division of labour you face as teachers of primary school children in this region?
7. What in your opinion do you think can be done to minimise the gender division of labour between girls and boys for better educational results to be achieved?
8. Is there anything you will like to say concerning gender division of labour and the education of children in this region?

Interview guide for basic education officials in Mbengwi

1. Are you aware of the fact that children in the rural areas work before and after school?
2. Are you aware of the practice of gender division of labour between boys and girls in most rural areas? Yes/No. If yes what do you think is the course of that?
3. Has the government put in anything to avert the situation?