CASE STUDIES OF OVERSEAS KENYAN STUDENTS
AT LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA: ACADEMIC AND
RELATED CHALLENGES

Submitted by:

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of Master of Education

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## List of Abbreviations:

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>A.B.C.</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Corporation.</td>
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<td>A.U.C.</td>
<td>Australian Universities Commission.</td>
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<td>A.U.S.</td>
<td>Australian Union of Students.</td>
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<td>C.M.S.</td>
<td>Church Missionary Society.</td>
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<td>C.P.E.</td>
<td>Certificate of Primary Education.</td>
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<td>F.G.M.</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation.</td>
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<td>H.I.V./A.I.D.S.</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune</td>
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<td>I.P.O.</td>
<td>International Programs Office.</td>
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<td>K.A.C.E.</td>
<td>Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education.</td>
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<td>K.C.P.E.</td>
<td>Kenya Certificate of Primary Education.</td>
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<td>K.C.S.E.</td>
<td>Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.</td>
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<td>M.I.U.</td>
<td>Management Information Unit.</td>
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<td>N.L.C.</td>
<td>National Liaison Committee.</td>
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<td>N.C.E.O.P.</td>
<td>National Committee on Education Objectives and Policies.</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>O.E.C.D.</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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I reserve my special thanks to my precious wife, Emmy Kole, who persevered during my absence from home as I buried myself in books. She bore the brunt of my late night readings as well. Thanks are also due to my children, Daniel Kipchumba and Shirley Cherop for their far reaching moral support and for bearing with me during my two years of absence from home. I thank my parents – in – law, Julius and Martha, who took care of our children while I was away for studies in Australia. Many thanks are due to my mother, Mary Jebo-Karan, for the sacrifices for my upbringing and education. To them all I say a big thank you very much “Kongoi missing”.
This study involves an exploration of the perceptions of four overseas Kenyan students about their educational experiences at La Trobe University. A related aim of this research is to find out how these four students’ previous learning in Kenya affects their learning and living experiences in Australia, for instance, in terms of demands associated with differences in learning and teaching styles, cultural expectations and proficiencies in English.

A non-positivist, qualitative methodology is adopted for this research which employs an interview-based case study approach. Qualitative research demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial and that everything has the potential of being a clue which might unlock more comprehensive understanding of what is being researched.

While the findings of this study confirm current understandings of the issues that international students commonly face, they also provide a more complex and individualized picture of the needs and aspirations of overseas Kenyan students. As the case studies demonstrate, the academic and related challenges four Kenyan students have encountered at La Trobe University are best understood in relation to several contexts. The difficulties these international students have experienced in the context of transition or border crossing – between two countries, cultures and educational systems – were exacerbated by inadequate pre-departure preparation and orientation on arrival. Incongruities between two educational systems – in particular between...
their prior teacher-centred schooling in Kenya and the unfamiliar student-centred university education in Australia – colour the academic and related challenges such students struggle to address, at least in their initial year at University. The broader, global context of the commodification and marketization of higher education – along with increasing strains of an under-resourced university sector in Australia – also impinge upon the lives of these four La Trobe students, in a variety of ways.
Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in this thesis were approved by the Faculty of Education and Human Ethics Committee.

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Signature of Candidate    Date
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study is about overseas Kenyan students, their educational experiences and their views about teaching and learning, English proficiency, learning resources and cultural differences. It attends to student concerns and views on what constitutes successful learning within Australian and Kenyan contexts; and examines the ways in which these students’ experiences relate to the circumstances of the globalization of education.

1.1 Potential significance – overseas Kenyan students

The aim of this study is to make policy makers, lecturers, counselors and other interested parties aware of the educational experience of international Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University, in a context that is commonly assumed to be similar for all international students. Although the experiences of international students in foreign universities have been studied previously (Ballard and Clancy 1991, Moncrief and Ridsdale 1995, Arthur 2004), research focusing on the experiences of overseas African students is lacking and more specifically for those from Kenya.

By extending inquiry to overseas Kenyan students and focusing particularly on those at La Trobe University, this study aims to address the prior deficiency and to explore the connections between overseas Kenyan students’ educational experiences in Kenya and in Australia. I have concentrated on how well the
Kenyan education system prepares students for overseas studies, taking into account teaching and learning styles, English language, learning resources and the education of girls. I have also looked at the issues that the four students face and how they deal with these issues, in order to investigate assumptions about University policies on the internationalization of education.

The rest of this chapter, in different ways, develops the potential significance of this study, the contexts, the aims and the in-depth focus on four Kenyan students.

1.2 Contexts

This study has four interrelated contexts. The first and broadest dimension situates the international context of education in an era of globalization. More particularly, discussion includes how Australian universities, following the policies of Australian governments, have become open to international markets which effect the marketization of the teaching and learning of international students.

A second context focuses on the general development of university education in Australia and the policies that led to the introduction of full-fee paying international students. Most attention will be given to the impact on overseas Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University.
A third context is the transition phase or bridging period between Kenyan students preparing to leave their country, their passage to, arrival and settlement in Australia. This involves the preparation of international students for overseas studies and the process of transition and orientation at La Trobe University. Also explored are challenges that face these ‘border crossers’ and the solutions that are suggested to enable them to adjust and achieve their goals.

A fourth context, the Kenyan education system is worth looking into because of the influences it has had on Kenyan students studying in Australia. The Kenyan context requires a brief history of Kenya as a country and the general development of education policies to date.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This research inquiry sets out to provide Kenyan students with opportunities to express what is most important in their experiences in Kenyan schools/colleges and at La Trobe University. It has two primary objectives. The first aim is to inquire into the effects of overseas students being regarded as clients or consumers in a market driven environment, including, in this situation, their needs which may not be addressed properly. This involves in part finding out about the unmet needs overseas Kenyan students are currently facing.

The second aim is to apply research methods which will enable me to explore how an institutional view of overseas students as consumer objects limits an
understanding of the issues that affect the teaching, learning and settlement of overseas Kenyan students at La Trobe University. In this case I look critically at current research in international education and apply constructivist and interpretivist approaches to research in order to hear the voices of overseas Kenyan students. Using in-depth case studies I endeavor to learn from Kenyan students and make sense of their experiences as they engage in the world they are interpreting.

Within the scope of a minor thesis, I have conducted in-depth interviews with four Kenyan students currently studying at one university. Although such a small sample size may be seen as a limitation, it offers an opportunity for interactive engagement with the four interviewees and for richness of data, which is less likely to be possible with a large sample.

All necessary measures have been taken to protect the confidentiality of participants, including participants’ right to anonymity and privacy in terms of identities and sensitive information. Although I have revealed a number of defining characteristics about each participant in this study, I also have made a conscious effort not to link an individual’s information together in such a way as to make any participant overtly identifiable. It is worth mentioning that, although this study is intended to present the voices of only four Kenyan students, some of these views are shared by other overseas Kenyan students.
The four participants are from La Trobe University and the criteria for selection included a person’s willingness to be interviewed and availability for full participation in the project. Interview questions were mostly open-ended and designed to probe views on identity, educational experience, concerns and life experiences. I was also keen to let these participants identify topics and issues of importance to themselves.

1.4 Redressing Limitations of Previous Research Studies

The methodology used for this research is crucial to hearing the voices of overseas Kenyan students in the arena of international education. A review of the literature suggests that African students studying abroad are mentioned only in passing. Nor is there sufficient recognition of the fact that the African continent has many countries and many languages, both foreign and indigenous, and different levels of development.

Most of the important research about international students has used survey or questionnaire type methods. Research such as this study which is done by an international student will provide an insight into how university services, teaching and resources might be shaped to suit constituent needs. I would recommend that such research should start from the point of view of the overseas student.
1.5 Rationale for Researching Overseas Kenyan Students

In pursuing these specified aims, this small-scale research study is intended to address a weakness apparent in the literature. It is aimed at bringing Kenyan voices to the fore, compared with the common limitations of published research studies. Firstly, most of the literature assumes that African students are like others, and so considers African students only in passing. Secondly, writers have assumed a generalized position about Africa, when it is well known that there are diverse countries, ethnic communities, languages and systems of education. Thirdly, researchers have used instruments such as questionnaires and surveys, providing thin accounts of student experiences. Fourthly, there is need for ‘insider’ research by African students who have experience of studying in their home countries as well as in Australian universities.

Having lived, studied and worked as a teacher in Kenya and later as a university student in Australia, I have become increasingly aware that these two countries are worlds apart in terms of culture, teaching, learning and resources. This does not mean that there are no similarities, especially given these days of rapid movements of technology, knowledge and culture from one end of the world to the other.

There is lack of research about the effects of different cultural and social backgrounds on the learning of non-mainstream students like those from Africa.
Villegas and Lucas (2002) point out that learning institutions ignore the effects of the cultural and social experiences of non-mainstream students.

One crucial question about studies at university is whether the different cultural practices among students affect the way they learn or perform... Learning institutions have built on the social and cultural backgrounds of mainstream students while ignoring the social and cultural experiences of learners from non-mainstream groups. (pp.91-92)

A considerable part of available research with international students in Australia has focused on Asian students because they are the majority. By comparison the number of African students in western universities has been small but is rapidly increasing. The challenges, expectations and concerns that overseas East African students encounter are unique to them. For instance, as Castle (1966) pointed out, in respect to women and girls in East Africa

Many women and girls have grown up to believe in and accept inferiority. At school a girl carries the burden of her self-accepted inferiority into classroom and her progress is retarded by lack of confidence necessary to successful study. (pp.135-136)

The issue of gender and the problems in particular for international female students are rarely addressed in the literature, despite evidence to suggest they deserve attention. It is even more important to look at gender problems affecting
Kenyan female students. This is because of the male dominated cultural situation that they may have gone through while living and studying in Kenya. As an observer, I have seen female students in Kenya face myriad hurdles while trying to achieve their educational goals. This is the reason why I became curious to find out how they are progressing in their studies at La Trobe University. Arthur (2004, pp.46-47) asserts that, when female students move from their home countries (with male dominated cultures) to a country with more liberated views, they may experience higher levels of distress. Although international students are known to face adjustment challenges, female students are likely to face more intense problems and may be obliged to confront barriers rarely encountered by males (Shu and Hawthorne 1995, p.122).

There is very little literature written in respect of overseas students that includes views of African students, particularly those studying in Australian universities. Hence this study sets out to show the Australian educational experience as described and articulated from overseas Kenyan students’ perspectives. Liddicoat et al (2003) mention that

Hidden cultural differences also impact upon the use of colors in teaching. Red and black, for example, have very different meanings in African and Chinese cultures. University teachers also need to become more sensitive to cultural factors that are brought to the context in which education occurs. (p.72)
The potential significance, contexts, aims and design of this research are related to redressing the gaps or limitations identified above. It is my hope that the in-depth case study approach taken in this research will add another dimension to the rapidly growing body of literature on international students. The next section will outline how this thesis develops.

1.6 How the Thesis Unfolds

The introductory chapter is followed by chapter 2 in which I describe the process of finding and refining the research problem, leading to a formulation of broad questions underlying this research. Australian higher education and Kenyan primary and secondary school contexts are explored. Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to this inquiry and identifies its substantive, comparative and theoretical contributions.

Chapter 4 situates the selected approach and methods of constructing the four case studies within the discourse of qualitative research and argues their appropriateness to this research. The processes of data gathering, analysis, interpretation and presentation discussed in the same chapter. Chapter 5 deals with the analysis of the interview data taking into account the individual stances of the interviewees, four overseas Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University. Chapter 6 concludes the study and identifies implications of this research.
In chapter 2, the multidimensional contexts of this study will be discussed in order to understand experiences of overseas Kenyan students. These contexts are: internationalization of higher education in Australia, developments in Australian higher education, transitional contexts, and Kenyan Education system.
CHAPTER TWO
CONTEXTUALIZING THE INQUIRY

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss four significant educational contexts in order to understand the issues that are central to this research. The first two contexts involve higher education in Australia, including trends of internationalization of education and historical developments of Australian higher education, initiated by successive federal governments. The transitional period and “border crossing” context and how these affect settlement and adjustment of new-comers into another community, will be discussed. This leads into a discussion of the fourth context of the Kenyan education system reflected in the prior experiences of the four students, selected for the case studies, whose entire schooling has been in Kenya.

2.1 Internationalizing Higher Education in Australia

This section begins with the trends of international student numbers at La Trobe University and Australian government policies to promote internationalization of higher education.

The International Programs Office (I.P.O.) (2007) figures show that the number of onshore international students choosing to study at La Trobe University steadily increased between 2002 to 2005. During this period, China had 29 per cent, India 19 per cent, U.S.A 11 per cent and the rest of the countries, including Africa, had
4 per cent of the enrolled overseas students. According to La Trobe University’s Management Information Unit (M.I.U.) 2006, overseas students studying in Australia from China and India each had 20 per cent, Vietnam 10 per cent and other countries, including Africa, less than 10 per cent of the enrolled international students (see appendix 5).

The steady increase in international enrolments in La Trobe University over the last five years can be seen in the context of the wider Australian trend increasingly apparent over the preceding decades. Arthur (2004) indicates that Australia has experienced continued growth in international student numbers, for instance, in the two years (2000-2001) the numbers increased from 188,000 international students in 2000, to approximately 190,000 international students enrolled with Australian education providers in 2001. These figures were expected to greatly increase in the near future. The International Development Program (I.D.P.) (2004) report estimated over 200,000 international students in Australian Universities in 2004. Arthur (2004) went on to state that in 2004 an estimated 1.8 million international students were enrolled in educational institutions around the world. The global demand for international education, Arthur (2004) speculated, is unprecedented and its growth is expected to reach 7.2 million in the year 2025.

Changes in policy have been no less marked. Williams (1989) argues that Australian governments, in recent years, have adopted a policy that promotes
Australia as a competitive and high quality source of educational services and
provides grants to universities and colleges to assist these institutions to market
available courses abroad to attract and recruit international students. Prior to this,
in the early 1980s, the majority of overseas students were supported through aid
programs such as the Colombo Plan (started in 1950s) which subsidized student
programs (Hambly, 1994). The Jackson and Golding Reports (1985), which took
a long time for deliberations to arrive at recommendations, led to a new policy on
overseas students. This policy provided for a new initiative whereby overseas
students, who were not accommodated within the quota of subsidized students,
were supposed to pay full tuition fees for their courses. This led to an era of the

As a result of the new policy as, Liddicoat et al (2003) point out, there has been a
dramatic upsurge of interest within the Australian education sector to attract and
recruit students from overseas, driven largely by the financial benefit for the
institutions. The other driving force is the under funding by Australian
governments. Liddicoat et al (2003) assert that this attitude is highly supported
and promoted by the Australian government which formally adopted the policy of
exporting education services in order to boost the country’s foreign exchange
earnings. According to Williams (1989, pp.9-10), other advantages of foreign
students coming to a country include the promotion of government relations with
other countries, and the spread or greater appreciation of the language and
culture of the host countries. Such advantages, Williams (1989, p.10) asserts, are
hard to quantify and economic benefits seem to strengthen the case for a policy of charging foreign students fees. This is the main reason why successive Australian governments commissioned reports and policies into international education during the mid 1980s. These reports showed greater recognition of the market potential for Australia’s education system as an export industry.

A contrast with the preceding period is emphasized by Williams (1989, pp.9-12). He claims that between 1950 and 1965, Australian governments put in place restrictions to prevent foreign students from coming to Australia through the “back-door” method of immigration, and also from displacing local students in the universities. Williams also argues that in 1950s and 1960s governments in the countries where most of the foreign students were enrolled did not seem interested in assessing the benefits that accrued to them from overseas students.

Although the consequences of these reforms on international students are substantial, little research exploration and understanding of this seems to have been undertaken. Arthur (2004) argues that the growth in international student numbers, due to deregulation of prior policies, has had far reaching implications in terms of provision of appropriate welfare and support services, learning and educational services, and the development of a good environment that could enable these students to achieve their individual objectives. These changes, Arthur (2004) says, would also lead to overseas students being acknowledged, encouraged and celebrated as part of the greater education picture. Altbach
(2001) points out that it is now of paramount importance for universities to market courses overseas, yet evaluation of overseas students’ experiences and satisfaction with “the product” has not been done to meet the expectations of “the consumers”. Universities have been competing and scrambling for a portion of the international education market sometimes through unplanned marketing and aggressive advertising by private agents. According to Fairclough (1992)

Commodification is no longer a surprise for sectors such as education to be referred to as “industries” concerned with producing, marketing and selling cultural or educational commodities to their “clients” or “consumers”. It has recently gained new vigor and intensity as an aspect of the “enterprise culture”. (p.207)

Watchdog organizations, such as the National Liaison Committee (N.L.C., Canberra), have the responsibility to look into the impact of changes in higher education, the quality of services provided to overseas students, teaching and learning processes, and the standards of overseas qualifications prior to student admission to universities in Australia. The effectiveness of this committee needs further discussion. Rikowski (2002) points out that, as commercialization of institutions takes place, universities pay close attention to their core responsibilities of teaching, learning and research and less attention to overseas student needs and support. This author also stressed, in a paper presented at the House of Lords in London, that
There should be limits to the business takeover of education and more regulation of the role of business in educational institutions so that business interests do not corrupt educational goals and processes. (Rikowski 2002)

Universities, Arthur (2004) says, have established international student objectives to deal with immediate issues such as settling in and accommodation problems which are a major concern for international students. La Trobe University has the International Programs Office which deals with issues concerning international students. These relevant student service facilities, which were set up to act overtly or covertly, in the interest of overseas students, cannot act beyond their set limits and regulations. As a postgraduate international student I have come to know that some of the programs put in place to assist overseas students are not fully utilized by these students simply because they are not aware that these services do exist. It is also possible that the nature of some of these programs is not sensitive to overseas students’ particular needs. Arthur (2004) points out that

The reputation of educational institutions lies in their capacity to deliver quality academic and support services: the danger lies in treating international students as “commodities” without considering their roles in a rich cultural exchange and how their learning experiences needed to be supported. (p.6)

When international student industry is deregulated, it encourages a new emphasis on marketing, and privatization, commodification and value of the
dollar. This leaves such areas as welfare and support services and improvements to the teaching and learning process lagging behind when budgeting for institutions is done. Arthur (2004, pp.1-4) states that Australia has experienced continued growth in the number of overseas students (see Appendix 6). This has raised a concern that the economic value of international students is driving internationalization without due regard to the available resources allocated to ensure adequate campus infrastructure and student support. In the 1980s universities in Australia accommodated small numbers of overseas students, but the quality of services to these students could not be reasonably maintained, especially when their numbers increased to hundreds of thousands in recent years (Moncrieff and Ridsdale 1995, Nancy Arthur 2004). The initial influx of large numbers of overseas students into Australian institutions placed huge strains on many welfare services. Lecturers were also faced with the challenges of teaching large classes of increasing numbers of students. The need for quality services provided to an ever increasing overseas student population causes higher education institutions to overstretch their domestic resources, in the struggle to meet unprecedented demands for educational services and programs.

Although there has been an increase in the number of researchers in the field of international student services and needs, research too seems to have lagged behind, in part distracted by commodification and marketization imperatives (Williams 1989, Noi and Smith 1990, Ballard and Clancy 1991, Humfrey 1999,
Liddicoat et al 2003, Arthur 2004). Thus, it would be in the interest of the higher education systems to focus less on overseas students as an economic unit and more on these students as self-determining, reassuring, understanding and feeling human beings.

Humfrey (1999, p.80) points out that secure and happy international students are more likely to be academically successful, enjoy good memories of their time overseas and so become satisfied customers. On other hand, Noi and Smith (1990) argue that adjustment problems and over-socialization can lead to poor academic results in overseas students. In order for these students to be successful, University environments have to be welcoming, encouraging and liberating to the learners especially those who may seem to be disadvantaged, reserved and inexperienced, but also very ambitious, focused, studious, diligent and respectful. International students may feel confused, lost and hopeless due to different cultural and learning contexts (Noi and Smith 1990, Ballard and Clancy 1991). Overseas students may seem a homogenous group with similar needs and experiences, but it is important to recognize that they are from different nationalities with different cultural, ethnic, educational and life experiences. They are also different in gender, personality and levels of exposure to westernization.

The next section will be a brief discussion on developments and challenges of higher education in Australia. It will feature current debates on Australian
government policy changes to the university education and how these changes affect local and overseas students.

2.2 Historical Developments in Australian Universities

Historical trends in Australian university education, including some of the landmark committee reforms and their implications on higher education, will be discussed. Finally, I will explore the discourse of current challenges on higher education in Australia.

According to Coaldrake and Stedman (1998), the first university in Australia opened its doors to students in early 1830s (Sydney College later to become Sydney University). Sharpham and Harman (1997) point out that, in the immediate post-war years and early 1950s Australian universities were in a depressed state. This prompted the Commonwealth government to appoint the Mills Committee to inquire into the needs of the universities such as finances, activities and future developments. In the early 1950s, the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee Campaign produced a paper called “A Crisis in the Finances and Development of the Australian Universities”. This paper drew attention to the immediate financial difficulties of universities and the need for a coordinated plan to meet increasing demand on university facilities (Jones et al 1988, p.23, Sharpham and Harman 1997, p.138, Coaldrake and Stedman 1998, p.9).
In 1957 the government appointed the Murray Committee to look into Australian Universities. This committee revolutionized the financing of universities through the establishment of the Australian Universities Commission (A.U.C.) to oversee the welfare of universities (Jones et al 1988, p.23, Sharpham and Harman 1997, p.139).

The Martin Committee was instituted in 1964 to address problems affecting Australian Universities: rapid growth in student numbers, increase in costs, economic recession and search for a cheap form of tertiary education (Sharpham and Harman 1997, p.139, Marginson and Considine 2000, p.23). Marginson and Considine (2000) argue that the Martin Committee report

Would help motivate and direct the 20-year expansion which saw Australia double its efforts and which resulted in a complete transformation of higher education from a semi-private domain of upper-class culture and…training for elite professionals into a system of mass credentialing. (p.23)

As from the beginning of 1974, during the Whitlam government, higher education was made free and tuition fees were abolished (Coaldrake and Stedman 1998, p.50). During this time the Commonwealth government assumed responsibility for full funding for universities and colleges. Although the Whitlam government was praised for revolutionizing higher education, of the many changes it promised, few were delivered. The abolition of fees did not have a significant impact in terms of the socio-economic profile of the students and fairness to
ordinary tax payers who met all the cost of higher education when those who
used the system were mainly from upper income families. The Australian Union
of Students (A.U.S.) opposed the abolition of fees, arguing that the government
was not prepared to fund higher education as a universal entitlement (Jones et al
p.50.). In 1983, as Sharpham and Harman (1997) observe, the policy of free
higher education started to be questioned, whether Australia could afford a no-
fees policy.

The following summary about the Dawkins Report of 1987 draws on the work of
Marginson and Considine (2000), Sharpham and Harman (1997), the Australian
Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (1995-1997) and Marginson (1993). The report,
contained in “The challenge of Higher Education in Australia” paper (a forerunner
of Green Paper and White Paper in higher education), brought in far reaching
reforms in university education in Australia, led to amalgamations and the
establishment of the Unified National System (U.N.S.) comprising of thirty-six
universities. Secondly, it led to the introduction of the Higher Education
Contribution Scheme (H.E.C.S.) which was well accepted as fair and equitable.
Thirdly, due to its strong access and equity program, there was an increase in
university student numbers from approximately 394,000 in 1988 to approximately
650,000 in 1996. Fourthly, it encouraged universities to change their governance
and management structures in order to enhance the authority of the vice-
chancellors to reform academic staffing and make universities act like the
corporate sector. Finally, the Dawkins Report encouraged universities to diversify their funding sources to reduce government dependency. Universities responded by developing closer ties with industry, establishing consultancy services and expanding the intake of full fee-paying overseas students.

Sharpham and Harman (1997) noted that, by 1991, there were two major concerns over universities in Australia. Firstly, the declining quality of higher education, due to the Commonwealth funding spreading across more universities and the increase in university student numbers. Secondly, the Vice Chancellors were concerned about maintaining the international standing of Australian universities and their competitiveness internationally. Marginson and Considine (2000) have raised other problems facing Australian universities as a result of the government withdrawal of funding. These have led to the over reliance of universities on full fee-paying overseas students and the falling quality of university education. Coaldrake and Stedman (1998) argue that university lecturers are overburdened by too much teaching and supervision which limits their time for research and publication. As a result of lecturers and other staff being subjected to contracts and associated loss of job security, their morale is put to test. The next section discusses current implications of higher education reforms in Australia.
2.2.1 Current Implications of Higher Educational Reforms in Australia

From the above, it is very clear that universities are at crossroads and there are very many issues that need attention. According to an interview conducted by Curnow and Fullerton (2005) of Australian Broadcasting Corporation (A.B.C.) entitled “the Four Corners”, Australian universities have turned students into clients and degrees into commodities (see commodification in Chapter 3). The report declares that Australian universities have become “degree factories” as they churn out degrees to overseas full fee-paying students at the expense of quality and standards. It indicates that Australian universities are “rushing to sell a clever country and to destroy what we love (education)”. These pressures may have encouraged responses such as plagiarism by students and the awarding of degrees on the premise of ‘clients’ readiness to pay, lowering the academic standards.

Curnow and Fullerton (2005) echo other authors (Coadrake and Stedman 1988, p.78, Jones et al 1998, p.71) who argued that there was no longer quality and equality in Australian universities. They believe that universities have lost their social function as many students are being excluded, while those who have economic power buy their way into the university. Although H.E.C.S. was introduced to support students, it is not sufficient to serve the many needy students who ‘hunger for knowledge’. According to the Robson (2007) report, entitled “Students under Financial Stress”, university students are worse off today
in financial terms than in the year 2000 and this has adversely affected students’
capacity to study effectively.

Robson (2007) has noted, as a result of financial difficulties, about 24 per cent of all undergraduates obtain a repayable loan in order to continue studying (averaging approximately AUD $4,700 yearly, per student). According to Robson (2007) postgraduate students are struggling to complete their programs due to financial pressure and other commitments. Robson (2007) reports that students (who work long hours to support their studies at university) regularly miss classes as they attend paid employment working. Approximately 25.3 per cent of full-time students and 27.7 per cent of part-time students pursuing postgraduate studies regularly skip classes to attend employment.

During the interview by Curnow and Fullerton (2005), Dr. Brendan Nelson, the then Federal Minister for Education, argued that university education is a privilege and disputed the fact that the government had cut down funding to universities. He said “the government funding to universities has increased to AUD $4.4 million in the last decade”. But according to Curnow and Fullerton (2005) government funding per student has dropped by six per cent since 1996. As a result of this financial shortfall, university staff numbers have been cut and lecturers forced to “hunt” for elusive funds through research or else lose their jobs at the university. Curnow and Fullerton (2005) said that ten out of thirty-eight Australian Universities made loses in the year 2002 and the struggle for financial
survival is the norm for many universities. As a result of this, international full fee-paying students fill the gap created by the shortage of funds to universities (see Appendix 7). In 2005, universities in Australia received 7.5 billion dollars from international students and this formed the sixth highest government export income earning.

In addition to the above, Curnow and Fullerton (2005) indicate that lack of English language proficiency is an issue affecting overseas students (see discussion in chapter 3). Some overseas university students, when asked about the progress of their studies, said that it was because of English language difficulty (especially not being able to understand or follow lectures) that made them struggle in their studies. It also became apparent that International English Language Testing System (I.E.L.T.S) entry scores were sacrificed to attract greater revenue from overseas students (Curnow and Fullerton 2005, Andrade 2006, p.132).

Another issue that came up was the popularity of some courses at the university. Information Technology and Business Studies degree courses, according to Curnow and Fullerton (2005), are growing fast in many Australian universities, but the degrees awarded are questionable. Dr. Brendan Nelson (then Federal Minister for Education) responded to this issue by saying “universities are responding to demands from customers”. But what is the driving force behind the rapid growth of these courses? The Four Corners report indicates that most
overseas students chose Information Technology and Business Studies courses as a gateway to gaining permanent residency in Australia. These degree courses have acted as bait to attract more and more international students at the expense of quality. The Curnow and Fullerton (2005) A.B.C. report paints a grim picture about the future of Australian universities. They point out that as the Australian governments abdicate their duty of funding universities, Asian countries (China, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) are busy constructing modern university structures. The report speculates that, in fifteen years time, these countries will attract more overseas students, thus undermining Australia’s current popularity.

From the discussion above, it is apparent that Australian university education has undergone many changes that have helped to shape the current situation. Government cuts in university funding have had a great impact on the policies of universities. Although the introduction of full fee-paying overseas students may have helped to fill the gap created by lack of government funding, it has led to seemingly insurmountable difficulties. It raises more questions about the quality of degrees offered to overseas students, university education accessibility, retention of qualified lecturers and provision of student services, such as counseling, library use and assistance with English language (services essential to border crossers such as overseas students).

The next section is a discussion in experiences of students on transition, as ‘border crossers’.
2.3 Students in Context of Transition

This section will discuss the challenges that students in a process of transition or as ‘border crossers’ encounter and ways in which these challenges can be overcome. Transition or border crossing involves a process in which persons experience a shift in their individual assumptions or worldviews, entailing loss of familiar ways of doing things, routines, beliefs or settings, which are left behind in order to adapt to changing life circumstances (Arthur 2004, p.18). Reidy (2006) hints that organizations (such as universities, schools and communities) are cultures into which new-comers (overseas students) are socialized. Arthur (2004) states that during transition, new-comers are exposed to cultural norms and behaviors that contrast with their own cultures and this poses a challenge for individual understandings of self, assumptions about others or the beliefs about the world. This relates to overseas students who may experience ‘culture shock’ when they arrive in a new country and begin at new university. In most cases they find many things confusing and strange.

Reidy (2006) views culture as involving shared views of the world which may or may not be familiar to new members in a community, such as overseas students. Further, socialization into organizational culture can be achieved through learning various cultural forms (symbols, language, narratives and practices) that enable people in the organization to make sense of the culture and maintain it. During times of transition new members of the community will need effective coping
resources for managing cultural demands (Arthur 2004). To adjust to an
Australian way of life, overseas students need to understand an Australian
English (accent, idioms expressions and slang) and socio-cultural practices (such
as queuing, independence, respecting females and so on).

Reidy (2006) has identified four coping resources as language, symbols,
narratives and practices. These resources enable new members to a community
to make sense of the implicit ideas, norms and rules of the organization, in order
to accomplish everyday activities. For example, language provides scripts for
people to follow. Consequently, frequently repeated practices show things
allowed and disallowed so that people can participate appropriately in specific
situations. International students can learn Australian ways of doing things
through interacting with Australians. The more they mix with fellow Australian
students, for example, the more they adjust and become comfortable.

Arthur (2004) has summed up coping strategies for new-comers by saying,
“crossing cultures may mean shedding prior roles, usual ways of operating in
those roles and building new sources of personal identity” (p.17). Liddicoat et al
(2003) describe transition as crossing the boundaries of individual cultural
experience and new-comers as occupying the “third place”. This “third place” is
neither that of the first culture nor that of the target culture but somewhere
between the two. Reidy (2006) stressed that the objective reality of any
organization is created by people’s everyday interactions within the organization.
The new members in the organization, according to Arthur (2004), need to immerse themselves immediately into learning and adjusting to the new environment. When new-comers’ adjustment into a new culture is disrupted by unfamiliar ways of interacting and unusual sources of personal validation, a sense of confusion and conflict may result (Liddicoat et al 2003, p.77, Arthur 2004, p.18). In order to avoid such conflicts and confusion, local students ought to be warm and accepting to overseas students and vise versa. Universities need to put in place resources and support that enable “border crossers” to adjust easily. In the next part of this section, resources and support for students in transition will be discussed.

2.3.1 Resources and Support for Students as “Border Crossers”

According to Reidy (2006) new members have to learn the languages of the organization before they can fully understand the culture and participate in it. The author identifies the four characteristics of a new member of the community and what the new learner should have in order to be a good language learner. The new learner should seek for any opportunity to use the target language, have a strong motivation for learning the language of the community, take risks even if this causes embarrassment, and be able to adapt to a variety of learning situations. International students ought to use, without fear or shame, the language of the host community as much as possible, in spite of their lack of proficiency.
Students entering a relatively unfamiliar culture for the first time find interaction to be important to learning (McNamara and Harris 1997, Reidy 2006, Arthur 2004). Reidy (2006) emphasizes that the relationship between the new-comer and the host culture can be one in which local knowledge, symbolic meanings and language take long to be learned, unless there is significant congruence between the two cultures. Reidy (2006, p.54) further states that “similarities in the identities, the activities and linguistic means by which these identities are accomplished, mean that the transition into place of learning” may be less challenging to the newcomer. Obviously overseas students who already speak English fluently will find a smoother transition into English speaking societies and cultures.

“Border crossing” students have the opportunity to participate and re-negotiate the many possible cultural, political and social structures that exist in the new organization (Arthur 2004, p.19, Reidy 2006, p.54). Arthur (2004) has summed up the process by which a newcomer adjusts into a new organizational culture.

(It) progresses from the initial excitement and optimism about entering the new culture to a downward shift in morale, which reflects cross-cultural difficulties and the accompanying negative effect. (During) adaptation and recovery there is a shift towards… strategies for managing in the host culture (that) are mastered as morale improves. (p.19)
Discussing the image of “border crossers”, Reidy (2006) shows the difficulties that they face in the transitional phase, especially if they are not committed to particular sets of ideas or see the world from ‘in-between divisions’. These sets of ideas are described by Arthur (2004, p.19) as comprising “individual differences, intrapersonal and interpersonal variables” which impact on the adjustment of the new-comer in crossing cultures. Reidy (2006, pp. 56-57) asserts that difficulties of transition arise from both general and particular characteristics of each situation. In addition, the “border crossers” in transition experience a loss of autonomy and control or agency, as they move from a situation of “having” or “being” to a situation of “lacking”. How overseas students respond to the transitional period in a new culture depends on the extent to which they can participate in decisions about issues that affect them and gain positive perceptions of their competence from others with whom they come in contact (McNamara and Harris 1997, p.18, Arthur 2004, p.19, Reidy 2006, p.57).

In her description of the “border crossing” as a routine, Reidy (2006) indicates that it also involves a certain degree of risk and redefinition. The author goes on to say “border crossing” is a challenging undertaking and the outcome can be diminishing rather than enhancing of learner opportunities. Even though Arthur (2004) agrees with the notion of “border crossing” as challenging (as stated above), these challenges shift over time, usually from worse to better. In order for a positive shift to occur and effective learning and achievement to take place, people require many kinds of resources and support (Reidy, 2006). In fact
“border crossers” might require more resources than others expect and see as appropriate. Support is a powerful coping resource to enable “border crossers” to make the rather difficult transition manageable. People who scaffold the learning must negotiate with the learners the extent to which they can be self-directed, independent or autonomous in any given situation. The “border crossing” learner requires interactions that are based on empowering expectations (Arthur 2004, p.40, Reidy 2006, p. 59).

Reidy (2006, pp. 59-60) visualizes the “border crossing” learner in three images: as an agentic-set, which emphasizes the learner speaking out and acting in order to become, as a performer who must rely on face-to-face interactions with the others and as self-directed, obtaining knowledge and resources needed to carry out particular tasks. On the other hand, Reidy (2006) points out that the difficulties of the self-directed learner centre on the complex nature of the learner's situation or context and the nature of the learning site. As difficulties (such as learner's early experiences) limit self-directed learning, “border crossers” are depicted as lacking some essential knowledge or understanding necessary to become full members of the new organizational culture or sub-cultures.

In conclusion, border crossing can be very challenging as people in transition lose what they are familiar with (autonomy and control) when they enter a new culture or organization. As the experiences of the four research participants show
that they took long to adjust to challenges such as different English expressions, teaching and learning styles, food, transport and so on (see Chapter 5). But with time and assistance from friends and lecturers, they got used these challenges. Border crossing is challenging, but these challenges shift over time. People in border crossing need coping resources in order to become socialized into new culture. These could be learning the language, symbols, local knowledge, participation in decision making and positive perception. Support seems to be the most empowering coping resource for border crossers. Learners need to interact by immersing themselves in the new culture.

The next section will discuss the developments of Kenyan education from pre-colonial, colonial to post-independent periods, and indicate challenges facing the current education system in Kenya.

2.4 Kenyan Educational System

Introduction

Although this project focuses on four overseas Kenyan students studying in Australia, an essential context is an understanding of their previous country and educational background. The objective of doing this is to suggest the relationship between overseas Kenyan students’ experiences while studying at La Trobe University and the socio-cultural and educational experiences in Kenya, including any preparation for foreign education that they were exposed; the following discussion of the Kenyan context reviews four educational development areas
and the role of these in shaping the current educational practices and challenges in Kenyan schools. The first part will look at traditional Kenyan education, including informal and formal. The second focuses on missionary education and its impact on the developments of the Kenyan education system. In the third and fourth part I will discuss the development of the colonial education system in Kenya and review the education systems adopted in Kenya since independence. This will help in understanding policy implementation and the challenges that policy makers, teachers, parents and students face.

According to Buchmann (1996) education opportunities for Africans remained very limited during the colonial period. It is not surprising, therefore, that after independence in 1963, successive governments have continued to struggle to expand educational opportunities to all Kenyans, despite facing myriad hurdles. The current budgetary allocation to education by the Kenyan government stands at 30 per cent of the national budget. The trend has been to provide universal free primary education and this is seen in the government policies of the three successive presidents, Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi and currently Emilio Mwai Kibaki.

The four educational developments in Kenya as discussed in the following sections are, traditional African education, Christian missionary education, colonial, and post-colonial education.
2.4.1 Traditional African Education

Long before the coming of Arabs and Europeans to Africa, the African peoples had developed their systems of education (Sifuna 1990). Traditional African education in Kenya took two forms, informal and formal. Clearly, it is not sensible to regard education as that which takes place only in schools but rather to consider also the variety of teaching and learning that goes on outside formal learning institutions. As Sheffield (1973) states

> In any society the preparation of people both young and old for the tasks they will encounter later in life is done by a combination of formal and informal means. (Sheffield 1973, p.1)

Specifically, traditional Kenyan education was viewed as inseparable from society as both were interwoven within the same cultural fabric. Traditional education was more closely integrated into the daily life of the learner and not specialized and formalized as in western societies. This may have been the reason why many early Europeans who came to Africa assumed that Africans had no form of education (Sifuna 1990, p.3). Traditional education was geared towards the preservation of African traditional values, informally by parents and elders and formally through apprenticeships to craftsmen and initiation rites. This kind of education took place in and around the home in the form of games, riddles, stories and specific instructions concerning correct ways to behave towards other people (Sheffield 1973, p.2). Traditional education concerned itself with personal relationships, understanding and taking care of the environment and the
acquisitions of specialized skills such as curving, tanning, hunting and medication (Sifuna 1990, p.5).

Traditional educators had various ways of teaching the young. These were divided into two instructional methods. Firstly, it was informal in nature which included learners learning through play (imitation, wrestling, dances), oral literature, (myths, legends, folklore/folktales, proverbs), and learning through deterrence or the inculcation of fear. Secondly, learners were taught formally through involvement in productive work, theoretical and practical skills, constant corrections and warnings (Sifuna 1990, pp.6-9).

In considering the African environment today, it is no longer possible to observe indigenous education in its pure form, free from foreign influence. It has been modified in varying degrees and at different levels depending on ethnic groups, religions, families and individuals. However, it has not completely disappeared to give way to western education. Even in those communities in Africa that seem to be most westernized, it is always possible to find some elements of traditional education. Traditional education continues to form the background of the education that children receive from their families and local environments (Sifuna 1990, p. 11).

Sifuna (1990) points out that, the greatest threat to traditional education in Africa is the urban setting, where European languages are commonly used. Although
this tends to reflect the general transformation of most African societies, the rural areas still maintain a stronger attachment to traditional type of education. In this respect rural boys and girls are still learning in a two tier education system, their own and the imported one. Sifuna (1990) criticizes several aspects of traditional system of education: it leads to the neglect of the individual by focusing attention on the group, its adherence to tradition has been a hindrance to development, it has served a static society which changed little from generation to generation and it has allowed no room for the individual learner’s new career. Sifuna (1990) argues that

Formal instruction (of traditional education) was given not in an attempt to discover but to indicate the action to be initiated or doctrine or belief to be accepted. Emphasis was on amassing, recognizing, accepting and assimilating known facts. The duty of the learner was implicit obedience and submission, devoid of the spirit of enterprise and initiative. (p.14)

In showing that the traditional educators have been authoritarian and dominating, Sifuna (1990) points out that their task has been to compel rather than to guide, to indoctrinate rather than motivate and to preserve the past instead of creating the future. Learners became uncritical, imprisoned and conformed to the dominant minds of the adults who controlled them (Sifuna 1990, p.14).

In short, three conclusions can be made about traditional Kenyan education: it cannot be separated from the daily activities of a society, it can not be found
today in its pure form, it is threatened by western education and urban settings and it has negative connotations such as authoritarianism and indoctrination.

2.4.2 Christian Missionary Education

In this section I will discuss the contributions of early missionaries in initiating western education in Kenya and their achievements and challenges. Christian missionaries are credited for being the founders of western education in Kenya. Missionaries were active in what is now called Kenya some fifty years before the British Government assumed responsibility for the country (Sheffield 1973, p.8, Sifuna 1990, p.113).

Sifuna (1990) notes that the first missionaries to settle at the coast of Kenya in 1557 were Portuguese Roman Catholics (the Augustinian Friars), who converted about six hundred of the local people. The coming of missionaries to Kenya, from the 16th to the 17th centuries, can be grouped into three waves: the first wave was the Roman Catholic missionaries from Portugal, followed by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) and then by diverse groups of missionaries associated with The United Methodist Free Church, Holy Ghost Fathers, Consolata Fathers, Scottish Industrial Mission, African Inland Mission, Seventh Day Adventists, the Quakers and so on (Sifuna 1990, pp.113-114). Sheffield (1973) states that David Livingstone, a leading missionary to Africa, had argued that the primary tasks of missions were to spread Christianity, introduce (Western) civilization and stop the spread of the slave trade and replace it with
legitimate commerce (the three C’s). One way that missionaries extended civilization was through education which sought to inculcate basic literacy for reading biblical scriptures and manual tasks, supposedly valued for moral benefits.

This important phase of education was begun in Kenya by Dr. Ludwig Krapf in 1884 when Krapf and Johann Rebmann settled near Mombasa. Krapf translated parts of the Bible into Swahili and Kirabai languages to provide reading materials for his pupils in their preparation for baptism. In the late 1880s the school within Freretown had over 300 pupils (Sheffield 1973, p.9, Sifuna 1990, p.114, Ntarangwi 2003, p.213). By 1864 C.M.S. began to move away from the narrow evangelistic thrust of the German pietists (Krapf and Rebmann) to a more inclusive view of missions, one that would encompass education, health and community building (Sifuna 1990). Missions were seen by the colonial governments as a means of furthering colonial cause by spreading English Language and inducting the natives into the best kind of civilization (Sheffield 1975, p.10).

As education was an important activity of the missions before and after Kenya’s independence, missionaries’ participation in shaping education in Kenya is evident. Reed (2007) identifies several of these missionary contributions: Langford-Smith was the education supervisor in the heart of Kikuyu land and Max Morris was a teacher in the C.M.S. Teacher Training College at Kahuhia.
Leonard Beecher drew up a report on education for the government in 1948, which was designed to shape the future of Kenya’s educational system.

Despite the fact that missionary education was supported by the colonial governments, different missions differed widely on the best way to present this education. Some stressed the great value of the memorization of the Bible passages while others preferred teaching religious and non-religious subjects together (Sheffield 1973, p.11). Sifuna (1990) identifies four weaknesses of missionary education: the majority of the missionaries were not generally prepared or qualified to be educators, money was scarce, there was a shortage of trained teachers and there was no suitable curriculum available. Most of the missionaries had not trained as teachers and yet they were expected to train teachers for the bush schools. The training they gave was often very superficial and included a heavy emphasis on rote learning aimed at religious teaching and simple literacy (Sifuna 1990, p.115). Although missionaries have been credited for initiating education in Kenya, Ntarangwi (2003) views missionary education in a negative way.

The form of education Christian missionaries mandated demonized all traditional African practices and sold western ones through Christianity, education and colonialism. This legacy has lingered for many years after independence and many Kenyan children are quick to identify with western (Christian) values rather than their own. (p.218)
Kenyan African communities had differences with missionaries and missionary education and according to Reed (2007), out of dissatisfaction with a number of issues Kenyan African communities started the Independent Schools Movement which they run themselves. Some of these controversies were over female circumcision, which had been banned by most missions but Africans considered it their culture, and the limiting African education to a vocational type. As a result of these issues, some Africans withdrew from the mission churches and schools. For example, the Kikuyu community, which seemed more affected by these controversies, formed their own association with the purpose of setting up schools funded and run without government or mission support. Although most of these Independent Schools run by the Africans emphasized preservation of traditional culture, some of them clung to both Christian teachings and African customs. Most of these independent schools suffered from unqualified teaching staff, poor resources and a lack of proper curriculum (Sifuna 1990, pp.136-139, Reed 2007).

Sifuna (1990) notes that a number of independent schools were opened in western Kenya such as those run by John Owalo and his followers in Nyakach, Nominya Luo Independent schools and independent schools run by Chief Odera Akang'o. In central Kenya, there were two independent groups of schools formed by the Kikuyu community, the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (K.I.S.A.) and the Kikuyu Karing’a Education Association (K.K.E.A.). As these Independent schools spread Githunguri Teachers’ College was founded. It became an
influential institution as it provided teachers to these independent schools (Reed, 2007).

In order to contain the spread of this independent schools movement, the colonial government banned and handed over the running of some of these schools to missions. However, intimidation of teachers and pupils by anti-government and anti-church activists forced these missions to close the newly acquired schools (Reed 2007, pp.184-186). In spite of the many hindrances they faced, missionaries were helpful then and continue providing a lot of assistance to many disadvantaged children to receive education. Maathai (2006) asserts that a majority of early and recent Kenyan intellectuals, leaders and business people are products of missions or church run schools.

From the foregoing discussion, Christian missionaries contributed a great deal in the development of early education in Kenya. Despite their efforts to spread religion, western civilization and commerce, missionaries have faced many problems, but these have not deterred them from making contributions to all levels of Kenyan society. The next section will look at the developments of education during colonial days.
2.4.3 Colonial Education

The partition of Africa was prompted by various European nations scrambling for territorial empires. It was the famous Berlin conference of 1884 that led to the establishment of European colonies in Africa. The country now called Kenya did not exist before 1890 (see appendix 1). Unconfirmed sources say that Kenya got its name from Mount Kirinyaga (currently called Mount Kenya). It was the Anglo-German Agreement of 1890 that led to the allocation of Kenya, from the Eastern portion of the African continent, to the British. It was later, in 1920 that the country became the Kenya British Colony until independence from Britain was achieved in 1963 (Sifuna 1990, p.110, Gaciabu 1997, p.62).

The main focus of educational policies during the colonial period was technical training, partly due to racial factors and partly as a result of a concern that the nature of education should be related to the nature of the colonial economy. In 1909, the Fraser Report on education recommended an industrial apprenticeship scheme for schools. The colonial government in Kenya started to give attention to the education of natives after the 1919 Education Commission report. This Commission report argued for technical education to be given to Africans to enable them find a future in labor instead of the white color jobs (Sifuna and Shiundu 1995, p.85).

The colonial government supported the mission schools because education at this time was mainly under Christian missionaries’ control (as discussed above).
They saw missionary education in terms of reducing the rate at which western influences were corroding the traditional fabric of African society. They thought missionary education would solve this by teaching religious education, training on strict adherence to authority and teaching practical education of a technical nature (Sheffield 1973, Sifuna 1990, p.116). The colonial government responded to criticism that African education was far removed from the traditions and realities of tribal life, by setting up the famous Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924, which led to the issuing of an education memorandum that stated:

> Education would be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving so far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life. Its aims should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole, through the improvement of agriculture, the development of the native industries, the improvement of health, and the training of the people in the management of their own affairs. (Sheffield 1973, p.19)

This was to be done through preservation of African vernaculars and textbooks, using a methodology adapted to the African situation. As well, there was to be an increased effort in the education of women and girls (Sheffield 1973, p.19). The Beecher Commission report of 1948 placed considerable emphasis on the need for pupils to retain rural attitudes useful in rural development. The report also advocated for a system of education structured into four years in primary, four
years in intermediate and four years of secondary education (Sifuna and Shiundu 1995, p.86).

Nevertheless, education provided by the colonial governments was on racial lines namely, Europeans and Asians were given an academic type of education whereas Africans received vocational education. This differentiation of education systems did not go well with Africans as they viewed the vocational education as second-rate, inferior and designed to keep them in their place (as laborers). It was also designed to discourage African children from looking for clerical jobs but to enter the field of labor instead (Sheffield 1973, p.20, Sifuna 1990, p.117). In spite of the fact that the government was showing an interest in African education at this period, Sifuna (1990) asserts that, colonial governments' participation in African education remained minimal as more and more European and Asian schools were opened. The colonial government also set up separate education advisory committees for the three racial groups in the colony and gave less funding to African education (Sheffield 1973, p.22, Sifuna 1990, p.117).

An important turning point in African acceptance of western education began at the end of the 1st World War (1919). A number of reasons made this turning point possible, the most important of which was the persuasion of local chiefs and headmen to send their sons to mission schools for training. These literate children, the colonial government thought, would assist their uneducated father-chiefs in government affairs of making colonial administration efficient. Other
contributory factors were: the magic offered by reading and writing attracted youth to schools especially in societies where superstition had been widespread, the offer of free food, clothing and enchanting stories told by white teachers about foreign lands attracted children to school, and the fact that many Africans saw education as the most important way of improving themselves and as a gateway to employment in the new occupations created by the colonial government (Sifuna 1990, pp.123-124).

During the colonial era in Kenya, there was no clear choice of the official language to be used in teaching African children in African schools. The Bins report of 1951 portrays this confusion.

The Bins report recommended preserving selected tribal vernaculars while advocating the general elimination of Swahili. The report reasoned that the use of Swahili as a lingua franca impeded the learning of both the vernacular and English. (Sheffield 1973, p.46)

However, in 1952, the Cambridge Conference proceedings de-emphasized the use of tribal languages and urged more teaching in English in primary schools. Africans embraced English when it became apparent that knowledge of English was a means of gaining employment. It was during the late 1950s (towards Kenya’s independence) that missionaries were denied the sole privilege of providing education to Africans. The colonial government, however, recognized the educational contributions that the Church had made, but stressed that the
new demands of independent Kenya would require a more unified approach to educational enterprise (Sifuna 1990, pp.146-148, Sheffield 1993, pp.48-67, Gaciabu 1997, p.145). Although the colonial education policy and practice embraced important elements of education, training and production, African communities were not pleased with them. They rejected the political and socio-economic promises of this type of education as inferior and designed to curtail their political advancements (Sifuna and Shiundu 1995, p.86).

In conclusion, during early years of colonial period missionaries were relied on to give education to the natives. But later, when the colonial government took charge of education, it was offered on racial lines. Thus, Africans received technical education and Asians and Europeans got academic education. During the early period of colonial rule, there was no clear choice of the official language of instruction in schools. The promotion of English language, in later colonial years, was readily accepted for economic reasons. This affected the delivery and standards of education. Students with poor background in English performed poorly in national examinations which were set in English. However, Africans began to take interest in western education after 1st World War and the demand for the introduction of the English medium in African schools increased.

In the next discussion I will examine the development of education after Kenya’s independence in 1963.
2.4.4 Post–Colonial Education System

Kenya achieved its independence from British rule on December 12th, 1963 and this ended the period of colonialism. In 1964, the Minister of Education appointed the Ominde Commission to survey the existing educational resources of Kenya and to give advice on the formulation and implementation of national policies for education (Sifuna 1990, p.162, Gaciabu 1997, p.74). This Education Commission emphasized, in its recommendations that the system of education must help to foster a psychological basis of nationhood. It also recommended English language to be the universal medium of instruction in all schools and Swahili language to be compulsory in primary schools. This Education Commission declared that education in Kenya was more an economic than a social service and regarded education as a principal means of relieving the shortage of manpower and equalizing economic opportunities among all citizens (Gaciabu 1997, pp.69-73).

Kenyan governments placed considerable importance on the role of education in promoting economic and social developments after the achievement of independence. During this time education was tailored towards nation-building, promoting national unity through the emphasis on cultural and social values (Sheffield 1973, p.87, Sifuna 1990, pp.161-162). Linked to the expansion and reform in the education system was the Africanization of syllabuses and teaching staff, and curriculum reform with English as preferred medium of instruction from the early years of primary school (Sifuna1990, p.164). According to Gaciabu

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English teachers had poor competence in the language and the majority of students left school without adequate knowledge of the English language (see Appendix 4). The teaching of Kiswahili also became compulsory in schools.

Competition had bedeviled the use of either English or Swahili as a language of instruction in schools due to the government’s frequent policy changes. Sheffield (1973) points out that the government, in 1970, decided to introduce Kiswahili as the national language and medium of instruction in primary schools and this affected teacher quality because not all teachers were fluent in the Swahili language.

The National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (N.C.E.O.P.) report noted that the rapid economic growth had been accompanied by growing unemployment among the educated, despite the enormous increase in educational costs. The Committee report observed also that the objectives, content and structure of the education system had been highly selective and reinforced existing disparities among income groups, sexes and regions. In the 1979-83 government development plans, the emphasis was on education that was diversified, functional and qualitative in nature (Gaciabu 1997, pp.261-262).

A major policy change in Kenya’s educational system occurred in the “Presidential Working Party in the Second University of 1981” which recommended a restructuring of the education system from seven years of primary, four years of lower secondary, two years of upper secondary and three
years of university education (7-4-2-3), to eight years of primary, four years of secondary and four years of university education (8-4-4). The main purpose for this change was that the vocational and technical courses offered under the 8-4-4 scheme would be designed to make graduates at each level properly oriented to face realities in agricultural, small scale enterprises and other forms of self-employment (Sifuna and Shiundu 1995, p.87, Gaciabu 1997, p.263).

In 1998 the government of Kenya introduced the cost sharing scheme in education with an aim of reducing its budget on education, while dealing with increased enrolment, reduced quality of education, and insufficient funds for learning resources. Under a cost sharing system, parents and guardians met the cost of uniforms, transport, construction of schools, purchase of learning resources and extra tuition. The government was responsible for remunerating teachers from public schools. These new policies led to students from poor homes either dropping out of school or attending irregularly (see Appendix 3). Most parents also were unmotivated to educate their children due to limited resources and reduced returns from education (Nafula 2001, pp.3-4).

In 2003 the Kenyan government made a landmark change in primary education by making primary education free for all. This saw a huge surge in student enrolments (The Age, 3rd March, 2007). It also resulted in many problems for schools: facilities and equipment were inadequate, teachers were very few and unprepared for the challenges of large numbers of students in one classroom and
older learners who had no basic numeracy and literacy were accepted in classes. This proved a huge challenge for teachers (see Appendix 8, an 84 year old grade one student). As a result of free primary education, thousands of students missed out on form one entry into secondary schools. This is because the government did not build enough high schools to cater for the huge upsurge of primary students. The same problem is likely to occur with secondary students seeking tertiary entrance.

The Kenya government had made strenuous efforts to improve the quality of education. As a result of this, the number of graduates at every level substantially increased whereas employment opportunities dwindled for those with lower formal credentials. The consequences of this were greater pressure on higher levels of formal schooling and a pool of graduates that far exceeded the number of places during the succeeding years. This has led to vigorous selection and competitive examinations (Sifuna 1990, p.167, Nafula 2001, pp.6-8). It also greatly affected the quality of schools in terms of facilities, funding, teaching and learning.

2.4.5 Challenges facing Post-Colonial Education

In this section I will discuss some of the main challenges facing education in modern day Kenya. It is apparent that most of the schools in Kenya do not prepare their students for a global society (Castle 1966, Stabler 1969, Sheffield 1973, Court and Ghai 1974, Eisamon 1988, Sifuna 1990). An education system
can be a constraining factor to ambitious students who may eventually travel overseas for further studies. As Hayden and Thompson (2000) assert

Education systems rooted mainly in national concerns and constrained by national ideologies cannot educate young people to live meaningfully in a world society which is global. (p.200)

Research studies into problems facing schools in Kenya were done by researchers who were not directly involved in school policies formulation or in teaching but were involved in higher learning institutions or as foreign researchers (Sheffield 1973, Court and Ghai 1974, Sifuna 1990). The motivation behind such research may not have been primarily to highlight real issues affecting Kenyan schools but to come up with what the policy makers want to hear. It is most probable that authentic research findings may not see the light of day because they do not say what the authorities want to hear. There is need for more research on challenges and remedies for schools in Kenya and there should be more involvement of insiders, the educational personnel themselves. In other words the methodology used ought to involve the participants who are trying to gain insider insight into the real situation.

In spite of the fact that the picture so far painted about schools in Kenya is not so rosy, there are some high cost or prestigious private schools mainly attended by the sons and daughters of the well to do, which are not greatly affected by challenges such as inadequate equipment and facilities, teacher shortage, high
student drop-out rate and examination failures. However, these schools are few and scattered in the country. Court and Ghai (1974, pp.109-125) have succinctly pointed out that only the high cost schools have English language as a medium of instruction, are sufficiently supplied with qualified teachers and have pupils who are exposed to sufficient resources, materials and formal teaching, to do well in examinations. Students in high cost schools sit for the same examinations with students from disadvantaged public and *harambee* (un-aided) schools. These national examinations are the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E.) which is done at the end of primary school and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) at the end of secondary education.

A study by the Elimu Yetu Coalition/ Action Aid Kenya (2004), entitled "Monitoring of the free Primary Education and Establishing the Unit Cost Primary Education in Kenya" found gender disparities in school enrollment and that the participation rate of girls over the five years (2000-2004) had fallen below that of boys. The same issue was raised by Kenya’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2004), in its report on development of education in Kenya (see Appendix 3). According to Chege and Sifuna (2006), factors that confront girl-child education in Kenya range from in-school to out-of-school factors (to be discussed in p.63).
The following discussion begins with challenges that face schools in Kenya, in terms of teaching, learning and assessment, learning resources, the use of English language as medium of Instruction and girl-child education.

**Teaching and learning styles, and assessment**

This section will explore the teaching and learning styles, and assessment in Kenyan schools and the challenges that teachers and pupils face in classroom interaction. Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007) note that teaching in most developed countries is practised in a totally different way from sub-Saharan Africa countries such as Kenya. In the developed world, teaching involves collective, supportive and reciprocal processes, through sharing of ideas and alternative viewpoints. In this learning situation teachers and pupils build on each other’s ideas and thinking, this leads to improved learning outcomes (Abd-Kadir and Hardman 2007). Court and Ghai (1974) clearly described the way teaching was done in Kenya in the 1970s, in comparison to developed world.

> Currently, the schools put great stress on precisely the opposite qualities, learning mechanically by rote, memorization and absorption of large amounts of factual information. (Court and Ghai 1974, p.335)

According to the above authors, there was a heavy reliance on rote and the accumulation of a mass of facts and figures. These facts and figures were to be reproduced during examinations and, hence such a system fails to develop habits of independent thinking and does not foster critical and creative powers among
Both teachers and pupils face great difficulties. The teacher teaches in a language foreign to the pupils; the pupils have to learn a foreign language in order to be examined in subjects founded in an alien tradition. Therefore teachers lapse into a conspiracy with their students to prepare for the examination by the methods that place a premium on rote learning and little emphasis on thinking and understanding. (p.122)

By and large, the challenges affected both primary and secondary school pupils and did not auger very well with their future developments. Students were burdened with anxieties and disadvantaged situations that tended to encourage poor teaching methods and ineffective learning habits. Excessive rote learning through memorization supplanted thinking among students and learning became an acquired skill in the passing of examination. Most Kenyan teachers, whether old or young, talked too much and used lecture methods even in primary schools. Students memorized dictated notes, adhered to the syllabus and worked over old examination papers (Court and Ghai 1974, Eisemon 1988, Ackers and Hardman 2001, Pontefract and Hardman 2005). Eisemon (1988) emphasized that teachers in most schools relied on drill methods of instruction to impart knowledge due to two constraining factors. It was argued that the drill method was adaptive to the constraints imposed by teacher quality, textbook availability, language policies and the use of national examinations. Secondly, it was argued that expansion of
schools, due to the rising number of children, seriously constrained efforts to make even the most modest improvements in instructions.

When the overall standard of teaching declines through poor training of teachers, the standard of student performance will also decline and this works its way up to the university level. However, due to the fact that methods of teaching were crucial, there was a slow shift of emphasis from traditional methods of teaching to ones that encouraged and rewarded creative imagination, powers of analysis and reasoning, and clear thinking. There was need for corresponding changes in teaching materials and systems of examinations as well (Court and Ghai 1974, Abd-Kadir and Hardman 2007). Villegas and Lucas (2002) argued that when students receive meaningful teaching and learning, it becomes knowledge for them.

Research by Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007) found that, although international aid agencies have been training teachers in Kenya on learner-centred pedagogy, teachers have not been able to implement it. This is due firstly to limited resources, large classes and inadequately trained teachers, and secondly, the strong cultural and social influences that shape teachers’ assumptions about the purpose of schooling, the nature of teaching and learning processes and adult-child relationships. Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007) state that

(Kenyan) teachers view knowledge as a fixed objective and detached from the learner so that they see it as their role to transmit this knowledge to pupils
through rote-learning techniques...The notion of pupils questioning teachers is also difficult in a culture where teachers are perceived as figures of authority and respect. (pp.11-12).

According to Sifuna (1990, p.178), the current national primary examination called Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (K.C.P.E.) started in 1985, after the abolition in 1984 of the previous Certificate of Primary Education (C.P.E.). Ackers and Hardman (2001) note that these national examinations are narrow in what they test, mainly the recall of facts, which stifles creativity and critical thinking. In secondary schools, the first batch of students, in the 8-4-4 System, to do the new examination Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E.), was in 1990. The previous secondary examinations were: Kenya Certificate of Education (K.C.E.) done at the end of “O” level and Kenya Advanced Certificate of Education (K.A.C.E.) at the end of “A” level. Gaciabu (1997) declares that the terminal national examinations sat by pupils at the end of every cycle, as used in Kenya, have two purposes: they mark the end of a particular stage of school education and more importantly, they provide a criterion for selecting those assumed to be pupils for the next stage of school education. Examinations in Kenyan schools have high wastage rates at each point (the rate of failure is high, see Appendix 4). Schools also issue internal examinations which are set by subject teachers, and assessed in exercises and tests to give information relating each student’s standing among classmates (Eisemon 1988, Gaciabu 1997, Pontefract and Hardman 2005).
The examinations taken at the end of primary and secondary phases are used to rank schools according to pupils' performance. This makes the system of education in Kenya very competitive and selective (Ackers and Hardman 2001). A majority of government aided and high cost private schools, as compared to unaided (harambee) schools, tend to perform well in the national examinations. Students in aided schools have higher aspirations due to the reputation which their schools enjoy as having produced Kenya's elite. Students in unaided schools on the other hand experience a sense of failure and tend to despair long before they sit for the final examinations (Gaciabu 1997).

**English use in schools**


Teachers who teach English language in Kenyan primary schools are non-specialists and any primary teacher can be requested to teach English irrespective of training in the subject. As a result of the disparity of English language proficiency between the teachers and pupils, code-switching to other languages known to teacher and pupils is common (Eisemon 1988, Abd-Kadir and Hardman 2007). Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007) paint a grim picture about
the teaching of English language in rural areas, compared to urban areas, whereby trained English language teachers are in short supply.

English is spoken in addition to more than forty other languages. English is the official language in Kenya. English and Swahili predominate in urban areas and are reflected in most urban schools where English or Swahili may be used as an initial medium of instruction. The importance of English language is apparent in urban areas but for those who remain in rural areas, it is not apparent. (Abd-Kadir and Hardman 2007, p.4)

However, inadequate instructional methods in English affect the way students acquire the language. What are the effects of this on the student learning and the general classroom interaction? Classroom discourse in Kenyan schools is difficult for the learners to follow and the teaching direction and illustrations are expressed in an ambiguous language. Students rarely utter more than a few words when asked questions because they are hesitant to answer questions in English which they do not fully understand. Students also have difficulty in comprehending English textbooks and cannot apply the language learned to a task of practical importance. The language teacher is usually a non-native speaker who has been taught and trained by non-native English users, yet the teacher gets blamed for falling standards of English language (Eisemon 1988, pp.138-141, Kioko and Muthwii 2005, p.206).
Baker (2006) cites Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, a leading Kenyan academic and writer, who portrayed English as a hated language because of the way it was forcibly taught or imposed on learners.

In Kenya students learn and speak tribal languages while at home. They later learn English while at school where English is strictly used. This language of education is at variance with the other local languages. The use of English at school is strictly enforced through tough forms of punishment, for example carrying a plate with inscription ‘I am stupid’. (Wa Thiong’o cited in Baker 2006, pp.383-384)

Forcing students to learn a foreign language such as English has negative connotations. The teaching of English language ought to be organized and focused on spoken English – students’ ability to hear, understand and speak English confidently and on comprehension skills through critical reading, and by employing teachers of English who are well trained (Court and Ghai 1974, Kioko and Muthwii 2005). English language textbooks and other educational books must have a local context as their basis, as language cannot be divorced from a context use, nor produced in a vacuum (Baker 1993, pp.10-13). According to Kioko and Muthwii (2005, p.206), students in Kenyan schools do not have role models to emulate, and their opportunities to use English outside school are limited. This makes the attainment of English proficiency a very difficult and somewhat artificial task for these students to achieve.
Learning resources

Kenyan government aided schools have more resources and facilities compared to harambee (un-aided) schools. Most of the government aided schools have laboratories, libraries, whereas harambee schools are nearly always badly equipped and the lack of teachers and learning resources hampers the quality of classroom interaction. There is a serious shortage of teaching aids and other classroom resources in many rural primary schools which undermines active forms of learning (Gaciabu 1997, Ackers and Hardman 2001).

The rapidly increasing demand for more schools in Kenya has put a huge burden on and exhausted government resources. Politics play a major role in the educational provision and schools with links to politicians are given priority when government resources are being distributed. The unequal distribution of resources creates unequal learning standards among schools in Kenya (Gaciabu 1997, p.245, Ackers and Hardman 2001). Court and Ghai (1974) have described how politicians influence development of schools.

In order to maintain public favor, each politician uses his influence to try to increase the number of schools in his constituency. This has added to the already high fiscal burden and a drain on government resources. (p.187)

Mushrooming of new schools, as a result of political influence, means that the quality of instruction and facilities, such as science laboratories and libraries, has been greatly compromised. Low quality and high quality schools differ mostly
according to the availability of teaching resources and the level of national
examination performance. Corruption is another factor affecting the equitable
provision of resources to school in Kenya (Court and Ghai 1974, Eisemon 1988,
Gaciabu 1997). Money meant for improvement of schools' facilities and
resources ends up in the pockets of politicians and some school leaders.
According to Eisemon (1988), the quality of schools seems to have a greater
influence on academic achievement of students than does the kind of home and
family environment. Availability of facilities such as textbooks, libraries and
trained teachers can also affect the quality of schools and student achievement
(Eisemon 1988, pp.26-31). In trying to show the frustration that students
experience, Eisemon (1988, p.31) asserts that, “Many primary schools have
small libraries or storerooms containing, mainly collection of textbooks discarded
from previous years, maps and other materials”.

Ackers and Hardman (2001) point out that the shortage of reading resources in
Kenya is critical, especially in rural schools. Kenyan students rarely have any
opportunity to read or study from textbooks and this seriously hinders the
development of their literacy skills. Textbooks prescribed for use in schools are of
limited quantity, quality, and priced beyond the means of most Kenyans, which
makes classroom learning “an extension of pre-literate tradition”. This means that
students listen, seldom read and are made to copy information from the teacher
into their exercise books, and reducing the possibilities for productive teacher-
pupil interaction (Eisemon 1988, Gaciabu 1997, Gaciabu 1997, Ackers and
Hardman 2001). Ackers and Hardman (2001, p.257) argue that teaching and learning in schools is hampered by a lack of information and communication technology (computers, tape-recorders and radios).

**Girl-Child education**

Issues affecting girl-child education in Kenyan societies can be grouped into those that happen out of school and those that occur while girls are in school. The challenges facing girls are many and can be direct and/or indirect. Discussion begins with indirect, out of school factors.

Colclough et al (2003) point out that there is an under-investment in girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa. Gender disparities in education remain prevalent in Kenyan communities, in spite of the tremendous progress achieved in education (Nafula 2001, p.7). A majority of parents in Kenya, as a result of cultural reasons, do not actually support the education of girls given Kenyan cultural practices, such as calculating the rates of economic return from education of girls and the assumption that too much education of girls will prevent a girl from getting a suitable husband or else cause marriage difficulties (Colclough et al 2003, Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Chege and Sifuna 2006). Girls are often kept at home because their education is not valued as highly as that of boys. Some parents believe that educating a girl simply enriches her husband’s family while educating a boy is seen as enriching his own family.
The Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003, p.108) study found that the practice of early marriage was common among many societies in Kenya (more prominent among the people of Kajiado District), with girls under 15 years of age being married to older and wealthy men. The report also found in Nairobi that girls who become pregnant often dropped out of school and sought marriage or joined prostitution (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Muito 2004, Chege and Sifuna 2006).

Female genital mutilation (F.G.M.) is another factor behind girls’ premature withdrawal from schools. It is widely practised among the Maasai, Ameru, Kusii, Guria and Marakwet communities. Once a girl has undergone it, she is considered an adult woman and ready for marriage. Medical complications resulting from F.G.M. and pregnancies contribute to girls drop out from schooling (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, p.108, Muito 2004, Chege and Sifuna 2006, p.45).

Work burdens on girls at home are reputedly cited as a negative factor affecting their education. Girls are often given duties at home to baby sit, do housework, and fetch water and firewood. In many Kenyan homes, where one or both parents have died from H.I.V./A.I.D.S, girls have assumed the extra responsibility of looking after their siblings, and child-headed families are on the increase. Girls also work outside their homes, in saloons and child labour industry (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Muito 2004). Chege and Sifuna (2006) note that

There is the high opportunity cost of girls’ education. In many communities child labor is critical for the survival of some households and schooling represents a
high opportunity cost to those sending children to school. When it comes to childcare, girls are more likely to be involved than boys. (p.40)

Adolescent mothers constitute more than half (55 per cent) of adolescent girls in Kenya. The Kenyan government has a policy of re-entry of girls to school after giving birth, but many girls and parents are not aware of this policy. This policy lacked clarity and effective direction of implementation and hence received explicit resistance from a cross-section of Kenyan national leaders. These leaders argued that schools were not meant for mothers and that the re-entry policy would condone and encourage sexual promiscuity among adolescents. Considering that adolescent motherhood is often the result of sexual relationships with schoolmates or even abuse of schoolgirls by older men including teachers, such arguments only serve to direct attention to the skewed attitude towards girls and women (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Muito 2004, Chege and Sifuna 2006).

Some of the in-school factors include harassment of girls by teachers and male students, few female teachers who act as role models in schools, and repetition of classes as a result of girls’ poor performance. Other factors are lack of guidance and counseling about female girls body changes, teachers and parents low opinion of girls’ performance in math, science and technical subjects (see chapter 5.3 Kate’s case study), lack of facilities in schools that support girls’ comfort and safety, and drug and alcohol use among school girls (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Muito 2004, Chege and Sifuna 2006).
What are some of the intervention programs on girl-child education? The Kenyan government and civil-society organizations recognize the need for gender equity and have responded in a range of ways. Government has responded through its education reports, enacting the Children’s Act (2001), Gender Education Policy Paper (2003), and sending government representatives to international forums on girl-child education. On the other hand, civil-society organizations have responded through school re-entry programs, financing initiatives to support girls’ education, in-school food programs, bursaries and sponsorships, girls’ clubs, flexible models of schooling and promoting positive images of girls. Other programs are: centres of excellence started by Forum for African Women Educationalists (F.A.W.E.), improvements of teaching methodologies that encourage girl-child’s education capacities (initiated with the help of Aga Khan Foundation), advocacy and local sensitization (Elimu Yetu Coalition 2003, Muito 2004, Chege and Sifuna 2006).

In short, gender inequality in Kenya needs redressing. Girls face a lot of challenges in their pursuit of education ranging from those created by socio-cultural beliefs to those that school organizations system impose on girls. Government efforts to address these issues, in the past, have born little, if any fruit. It is hoped that current government and civil-society programs will improve the situation. The next chapter will review some of the literature on overseas students.
CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a brief review of literature related to international students and higher education in Australia. It sets out to develop a theoretical framework, an account of the experience of overseas students, a discussion of different approaches to teaching and learning and the influence of learning resources on the process of teaching and learning. The influence of English proficiency levels and cultural practices on schooling achievement, and the effects of commodification and internationalization of education on institutions and on learning are reviewed.

A considerable section of available literature on challenges facing overseas students has either viewed all overseas students as comprising one category of students experiencing the same problems or else has concentrated on overseas students from Asia, mainly Chinese international students. This imbalance may reflect the large student numbers from Asia, but has the effect of stifling the voices of a minority group of students from Africa or elsewhere (Noi and Smith 1990; Ballard and Clancy 1991). Although it may be true that the vast majority of overseas students experience more or less similar problems in studying abroad, it is important that researchers and educators consider differences in terms of educational systems, cultural practices and languages.
3.1 Overseas Students' Experience in Australia

Although overseas student experiences will be discussed in a way that shows they are similar for students while they are living and studying abroad, it should be understood that each individual student has some varied experiences to narrate. However, most of the stories about experience of overseas studies tend to have certain similarities and differences depending on student’s country of origin and prior exposure to western education and culture. In this discussion, similar views and slight differences will be explored.

3.1.1 Teaching and Learning Styles

From the foregoing discourse about Kenyan schools and cultural practices, it is very clear that there exist certain differences compared to Australian education system. In Australian schools and colleges, teaching and learning styles employed are student-centred, informed by constructivist theories of learning and treat students as knowers. According to Caroll et al (2005, pp.13-14), constructivist theories of learning place the individual at the centre of the learning process, learners actively construct their learning, and the teachers create the context and provide the relevant information.

In part, constructivism grew out of dissatisfaction with traditional education characterized by rote memorization, regurgitation of facts, division of knowledge into different subjects and lack of transferability of learning by learners to their everyday lives. Brooks and Brooks (1999, p.9) have written extensively about
how a constructivist classroom discourse should be handled. They categorize constructivist classrooms into five overarching principles: teachers seek and value their students’ points of view, teachers pose problems of emerging relevance, teachers build lessons on primary concepts and “big” ideas, and teachers assess students’ learning in the context of daily teaching. This constructivist approach to teaching and learning does not look for what students can repeat but for what they can generate, demonstrate and exhibit. However, the constructivist approach is criticized as a pedagogical framework that subordinates the curriculum in the interests of the child and stimulates learning only around concepts in which the students have a prior knowledge and interest (Brooks and Brooks, 1999 pp.35-36).

When a constructivist approach to teaching is used without due consideration of the learners’ cultural background and prior learning, such as in situations where coming up with personal points of view may mean disrespect, it is bound to fail. In most western universities, as in Australia, students are expected to adapt to the teaching and learning methods that enable them to come up with their own opinions, think independently, and perform creatively and with originality. Most overseas students have not been exposed to these styles of learning and therefore are bound to experience challenges in learning. Roberts and Gonzales et al (1994, pp.34-60) have pointed out that teachers must understand the working knowledge and cultural experiences overseas students bring and how these might have shaped their modes of learning. A majority of students travel
overseas for further studies for various reasons, such as to study in institutions that have superior educational and training facilities, and the prestige attached to such certificates acquired from western universities. Bunttjes and Byram (1991, p.27) state that overseas students need to be prepared for new experiences in foreign countries related to styles of learning, culture and language.

When overseas students come to Australia, it is tacitly assumed that they will adjust their learning habits to suit the new demands of the local educational system. However,

It is never made quite clear how they will achieve this desired metamorphosis, but they will certainly be criticized as using inappropriate learning styles if they do not somehow make such a shift. (Ballard and Clancy 1991, p.87)

Lowes et al (2004) have exhibited a clear understanding of how overseas learners are victims of their past experiences.

How you have learnt in the past, your previous experience of education, has not only given you knowledge and skills you have now, but it has also given you your beliefs about learning itself…Different societies may have very different ideas of the most effective and appropriate ways of learning. (Lowes et al 2004, pp.22-25)

Ballard and Clancy (1991) argue that, in Australian primary and early secondary schools, pupils learn largely by imitation, memorization and reproduction of
knowledge, but in late secondary and early years of university, there is a progressive shift towards a more analytical and critical approach to learning. Teachers raise issues which refer to a range of theories and interpretations whereas learners are encouraged to ask questions and evaluate. At this level knowledge ceases to be fixed and absolute but is open to criticism and development (Ballard and Clancy 1991, pp.14-15).

A majority of overseas students are not exposed to an analytical and critical approach to learning until they come to Australia, where academic staff become very critical of overseas students’ orientation towards reproduction of knowledge (Williams 1989, p.75, Noi and Smith 1990, pp.41-49, Ballard and Clancy 1991, p.18). Given overseas students’ culturally distinctive attitude to knowledge and strategies of doing examinations, several factors have been noted as hindering their excellence in examinations: time pressure and language inadequacy, attitudes to guessing answers (overseas students consider it improper to guess answers), cultural antipathy to the requirements for producing thoughtful answers quickly (they consider it impolite to do so), close reading word by word (considered essential for understanding the textbooks thoroughly and precisely in order to answer examination questions), and the greater difficulty on how to grasp the complexities of referencing (if they come from traditions which do not encompass the western construction of plagiarism) (Williams 1989, Ballard and Clancy 1991). Overseas students reproduce as accurately as possible words of textbooks and articles in their work (Noi and Smith 1990, p.52, Ballard and
All these learning deficiencies mentioned above, place overseas students at odds with the new educational expectations and hence they may not measure up to the standards expected of a university student. It becomes even more frustrating when overseas students fail to achieve their goals after spending huge amounts of money on overseas education.

3.1.2 English Language Proficiency

Liddicoat et al (2003) argue that international students face a number of obstacles in the Australian learning context. Among these obstacles is difficulty with the English language, especially with writing. This challenge manifests itself in essay writing and written assignments (Liddicoat et al, pp.39-40). Australian accents and idioms are unique, making it hard for overseas students to understand what is meant (Noi and Smith 1990, pp.42-43). In order for these overseas students to integrate and achieve an academic qualification, their skills in speaking and writing English need to be of a high standard. Williams (1989) argues that

Even some of the students who have been educated in an English Language school find reading and writing in English quite difficult at university level. Participation in classroom discussion and asking questions of staff produce particular difficulty. (Williams 1989, pp.74-75)

Kenyan students have learnt English as a second or other language which means that they may not be fluent in English language (McNamara and Harris
1997). Negative experiences encountered by students when they were learning English in their home countries will affect their linguistic competencies in their overseas studies (Williams 1989, pp.30-31, McNamara and Harris 1997, pp.8-9). It also goes without saying that a lack of English proficiency will also influence the progress of overseas students living and learning in western universities. Williams (1989) comments

> In most of their earlier English language courses, the (overseas) students have been encouraged to read for direct translation, reading word by word, with dictionaries open and pencils poised to list new items of vocabulary. (Williams 1989, p.32)

This shows the kind of cultural hurdles that overseas students have to leap in order to change their approach to speaking, reading and writing in English. Liddicoat (2003) critically sums up this situation as emanating from differences in educational cultures.

> You cannot learn if you are not fluent in the language medium of instruction. Many of the difficulties international students experience in their study derive not from "poor English" but from a clash of educational cultures. (Liddicoat 2003, p.123)

Cortazzi et al (1997) and Lowes et al (2004) view this clash of educational cultures in terms of a clash of communication cultures due to different use of
intonation, pauses, eye contact, body language and ways of presenting information. The real challenge with such differences between cultures of communication is that they often lead to wrong assessment of those who use them (Cortazzi et al 1997, p.79, Lowes et al 2004, pp.3-20).

3.1.3 Learning Resources

Understanding and accessing learning resources that are available for students in Australia proves to be challenging for overseas students. These resources are in fact more challenging for international students from rural, agricultural and less developed backgrounds that have moved to more developed and urban universities (Rao 1979, p.72). These students may not have been exposed to searching for information using a computer, the internet and a library with a ‘forest’ of books. As mentioned earlier, many Kenyan schools do not have good libraries, computers and laboratories, and many of the Kenyan students have not been taught to think independently or to analyze texts, but instead rely on using the teachers’ notes and on the teacher as the ultimate source of knowledge. Thus, these students face the consequences of learning to use very different facilities when they come to Australia. Furthermore, Macrae (1997, p.136) states that the need for novices to become computer literate often presents a huge obstacle.
3.1.4 Socio-Cultural Practices

Overseas students find their relatively different cultural backgrounds a challenge in a new university. Sharan (2002, p.40) has clearly defined culture as a set of learned behavior patterns (beliefs and values) that are so deeply ingrained that people act them out unconsciously and involuntarily. Villegas and Lucas (2002, p.91) argue that if all students entered school with identical background, knowledge and culture they would settle and learn easily. This is never the case where classrooms have learners from different backgrounds.

Most overseas students about to leave their home countries are likely to experience a mixture of emotions: fear that they are leaving their loved ones who are important to them, excitement that they are going on the biggest and most important adventure of their lives, and apprehension because they are venturing into a world they do not know (Noi and Smith 1990. p.56), and a community that may not accept them.

What are some of the adjustment problems that overseas students have to grapple with? According to Noi and Smith (1990), a large number of overseas students experience loneliness when they travel on their own for the first time. The experience of adjusting in their new environment becomes difficult as these students miss their families and friends (see Appendix 2). In addition to this, new and different climatic conditions such as the cold winter affect their mobility and adjustment. Also, the cultural context of Australian education and issues such as
time management, stand out as barriers and require a huge effort to overcome (Noi and Smith 1990, pp.37-52). In addition to the challenges mentioned above, commercialization of education forces educational institutions in developed countries to strive to fill their vacancies by recovering all expenses, which in turn disadvantages overseas students. This point will be further discussed under commodification of education (3.3).

3.2 Counseling of International students

This section of the discussion will look at the need for and provision of counseling of international students in the overseas higher education institutions. During the interviewing of participants, it became apparent that these overseas Kenyan students underutilize counseling services offered by La Trobe University, when faced with difficulties. Pedersen et al (2002) cautions, it should not be assumed that all international students will experience problems of adjustment that may require counseling intervention. The authors also observe that international students’ underutilization of counseling services may result from their preference for seeking help from individuals they know or are comfortable with. This raises some questions for me concerning this important service to students. What makes overseas Kenyan students underutilize counseling services? How do these students resolve their problems? What are the strategies to rectify their matching needs with provision?
Geldard and Geldard (2005) describe counseling as a special way of helping people involving the use of particular skills such as being congruent, empathetic, non-judgmental, respectful and supportive. However, effectiveness in counseling is highly dependent on the quality of the relationship between the client and the counselor. Counseling of international students, as Pedersen et al (2002) and Arthur (2004) observe, involves counseling across cultures. According to Pedersen et al (2002), in order for counselors to work with overseas students effectively, cross-cultural counseling should include

Three key dimensions: awareness, knowledge and skills. Awareness synthesizes barriers to effective counseling in the process, goals and outcomes of counseling…the knowledge that counselors need in order to provide effective cross-cultural counseling is of three kinds: knowledge about their own cultural backgrounds, training biases and blind spots, knowledge about their clients’ cultural backgrounds and knowledge about the cross-cultural counseling process. (Arthur 2002, p.196)

Sederholm (2003) observes that many students come to counseling because of personal problems such as loneliness, suicidal risk, depression, examination anxiety, financial difficulties and psychological and emotional trauma. On the other hand as Pedersen et al (2002) point out, particular problems that may affect international students cover a whole range of adjustment issues such as culture shock, language problems, isolation and loneliness of living in a strange country. Consequently, international students develop stress which may lead to many
psychiatric disorders and psychological problems (Pedersen et al 2002, p.185).

Bell (1996), in reference to British universities, suggests that

On the whole universities and colleges of higher and further education seem not to be aware of the impact that transition to a new educational institution and a new country has on (overseas) students studies…The students are expected to make their own transition, and to behave and study as if they were fully assimilated into the dominant culture. (p.78)

What are the reasons for international students not seeking counseling? Pedersen et al (2002) suggest four reasons for this reluctance. Firstly, international students from non-western cultures may not be familiar with the concepts of seeking professional help for emotional problems. Another reason is that international students may perceive seeking professional help as implying loss of status and thus may delay seeking help over a long period. Thirdly, they seek help from counselors when their problems may be at a relatively serious stage because they have first pursued other ways of dealing with their psychological stress. Finally, international students may be reluctant to attract the attention of authorities for fear of endangering their immigration status and national image.

According to Arthur (2002), there is compelling evidence that international students underutilize counseling services, and when they do use them, they are often dissatisfied with the services. How can universities deal with overseas
students’ unwillingness to attend counseling in spite of facing serious problems? Pedersen et al (2002) suggest several ways of tackling this issue at the student level:

Training students as peer counselors, establishing international student supports, marketing the university’s counseling services, establishing collaboration among fellow counselors, customizing counseling, offering group intervention and providing students with mentors…(They) recommend that universities make systematic efforts to educate international students about the nature of the services available, to communicate willingness to learn about their lives and most important, to address the students’ specific concerns. (p.200)

What are barriers to effective counseling (at counselors’ level) of overseas students? International students prefer counselors who are honest, genuine, trustworthy, accepting, warm, interpersonally skilled and empathetic (Bell 1996, p.116, Pedersen et al 2002, p.198). Some counselors adopt a general approach in understanding the experiences of international learners. This risks further marginalization of international students. For example counseling a Kenyan student is not the same as counseling a student from mainland China (Pedersen et al 2002, p.196, Arthur 2004, p.66).

Culturally–bound counselors judge international students on the basis of their prior experience with people who remind them of these students and see these students’ problems through their own definition of the situation. These counselors
impose interventions that are based upon their notions of helpfulness. This cultural bias or stereotyping in the counseling process is harmful to clients and invites failure (Pedersen et al 2002, p.196, Arthur 2004, p.69).

Pedersen et al (2002) argue that counselors’ assessment of international students is often impeded by communication barriers as well as the complexity of student problems. The authors state that communication barriers include difficulties in expressing feelings in describing problems in English, norms about asking and transmitting information, attention to non-verbal behavior and semantic difficulties. From the above, several questions arise: how do counselors break through communication barriers when clients have limited English language proficiency? Is it possible for counselors to be attuned to all the cultures of the many and varied international students?

According to Arthur (2004) counselors often wait for the client to introduce problems or issues pertaining to culture, assuming that the client will bring them up. Arthur (2004) describes the effects of this as follows.

This position places the onus on international students to bring forward issues that may be ambiguous, often at a time in their lives where they are facing a considerable amount of personal disruption in a new context and in a professional relationship that they lack experience. International students may also lack confidence about initiating conversation about culture, for fear of being judged or for fear of not being validated. (p.69)
Racial identity is another area within counseling of international students that is of concern. Counselors trained principally in western-oriented models of counseling and unable to take cultural variables into consideration may negatively affect their international student clients. The worldviews of these counselors need to be deconstructed to fit those of culturally different clients (Bell 1996, p.80, Pedersen et al 2002, p.196, Arthur 2004, p.74). Maneekhao et al (2006) point out, in reference to intercultural learning, that there is need for the establishment of the “third space” whereby international students (and counselors) distance themselves from their own cultures and from the target culture and operate at a “meeting place” where more than two cultures meet.

In order for counselors to be effective in counseling international students, Arthur (2004) argues, they should actively develop and practise intervention strategies and skills that are culturally responsive. This is what the writer identifies as counseling that requires counselors to step outside their usual ways of practising and handle international students’ issues in a way that benefit the clients (Arthur 2004, p.76). As Pedersen et al (2002) observe about counseling African students in American universities that

Most African students find Western theoretical and psychological frames of reference to be implausible…when working with African student clients they (counselors) need to be sensitive to, and handle with care, boundary concerns, authority issues, and attributes of disturbance. (p.202)
Another way for counselors to learn about counseling international students is by learning directly from them. This can be done on an informal basis through spending time in international students’ programs office, joining excursions designed for international students or participating in events that highlight campus internationalization. These sessions broaden counselors’ understanding and give them some warning of what they might expect to find with overseas students (Bell 1996, p.116, Arthur 2004, p.73). In most Kenyan institutions, counselors develop trust and friendship with clients before clients become free to narrate their problems. The strategies mentioned above can be a fertile ground to initiate trust and relationship for counseling overseas Kenyan students. The use of peer counselors can also be employed as most overseas Kenyan students seem to trust their friends with their personal issues.

Counselors can improve their effectiveness in counseling overseas students through adjusting their communication styles in response to client expectations and by acknowledging cultural difference. Counselors should consider how meanings of communication are interpreted across cultures. This includes consideration of verbal and nonverbal communication, such as the use of personal and interpersonal space, body movements and vocal cues (Pedersen et al 2002, p.179, Arthur 2004, p.77).
Pedersen et al (2002) recommend that counselors can help international students to adapt to counseling interventions by the use of pre-therapy orientation. In this way, they can prepare their international students to receive maximum benefit from counseling encounters, given their previous lack of exposure to traditional western approaches to counseling (Pedersen et al 2002, p.203). To give my own experience, during my first day at La Trobe University, whenever I encountered a problem I would reason out that I should try to handle it by myself and if it became insurmountable, seek advice from a friend. This reasoning stems from my community’s cultural teachings that men are not supposed to show any signs of weakness. Arthur (2004) has added that it is crucial for counselors to take proactive approaches outside their counseling offices through establishing a positive profile in the international student community and providing information to them about the purpose of counseling.

From the foregoing, it is clear that counseling styles have a huge influence on whether or not international students utilize counseling services. The better the training of counselors on cross cultural counseling techniques, the better their delivery of services to international students. As education becomes globalized, as well as a market commodity, the consumers should be provided with the best services in order to be satisfied with the commodity that they are buying.
3.3 Commodification of Education

This section deals with aspects of the commodification of education and its effects on higher education. It is a discourse that views higher institutions as enterprise cultures. According to Fairclough (1992) commodification is the process whereby social domain and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption. It is no longer a surprise for sectors such as education to be seen as ‘industries’ concerned with selling educational commodities to their ‘clients’ (Fairclough 1992, p.207).

Altbach (2001) points out that higher education is increasingly seen as a commercial product to be bought and sold like any other commodity. It has now reached the global market place and needs to be subjected to the rules and legal arrangement of World Trade Organization protocols. This has led society to view higher education as a private good, benefiting those who study or do research. It also divides the world into strong and dominant centres (developed nations), and marginalized peripheries (developing countries). Universities and other post-secondary institutions are expected to generate funds and to think like businesses and act less like traditional educational institutions. These private academic institutions sell skills and training, award degrees or certificates to customers (students) who are ready to buy (Altbach 2001, p.12). Altbach (2001) states that
Universities have all too willingly allowed themselves to be caught up in commercial activities and to compromise their traditional roles. If universities are to survive as intellectual institutions, they must pay close attention to their core responsibilities of teaching, learning and research. (Altbach 2001, p.2)

Rikowski (2002) sees the commodification of education as the way that educational institutions will become foci for marketing and advertising campaigns. However, there should be limits to the business takeover of education and regulation of the role of business in educational institutions so that business interests do not corrupt educational goals and process (Rikowski 2002, p.1). Williams (1989, p.12) points out that there are benefits and costs attached to student mobility and these benefits and costs may be different for universities and individual students.

Fairclough (1992) views the concept of commodification not as a new process, but as having gained new vigor and intensity as an aspect of enterprise culture. This concept, Fairclough (1992, p.207) says, can be seen as a colonization of institutional orders of discourse and more broadly the social order of discourse associated with commodity production. Commodification of higher education is strongly supported by business and industrial groups in Australia and Britain. This treatment of higher education as a commercial commodity is due to its financial returns. According to Welch (1988, p.388), commodification means a limitation of opportunities for the less privileged and a shift of resources towards the wealthier
groups in society. The move to return higher education to consumer market system enables governments to abstain from direct control of education and leave education to respond to consumer demands. Welch (1988, p.388) points out that this leads to loss of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and morale in higher education. Universities set out to advertise their programs to students and impose less rigid controls and conditions of entry (Fairclough 1992, p.214).

3.3.1 Effects of Commodification of Education

The pressure of governments to privatize higher education is part of a wider campaign to reduce public sector expenditure on education. This has led to the introduction of fees to overseas and local students which has profound negative effects. Firstly, these institutions experience severe financial loss in cutbacks as overseas students numbers fall. Secondly, there is stiff competition between institutions for overseas students as they seek them “energetically” in many parts of the world (Welch 1988, pp.389-390). Thirdly, the flexibility of university entry standards has been used as a banner with which to hide reductions in their requirements. This means some universities and colleges have had their entry standards for students from abroad dropped. Fourthly, the issue of equity is a profound problem as a large number of overseas students are self-financed. This skews education access to the wealthy from the first world and to the third world elite. Fifthly, the issue of the relevance of much of the course content is at best uncertain with respect to overseas students whose home country exhibits
The move to privatize elements of higher education is part of a wider campaign to sell off public utilities based on the view that the services provided are mere commodities. The commodification of higher education presents a striking example of this ideology in practice. Welch (1988) asks the following questions in response to proponents of commodification of education.

Is a narrow economic strategy, informed by right-wing pressures to reduce public sector expenditures, an appropriate ethic upon which to base policies and changes in higher education, especially when such a narrow economism is often pursued at the expense of overall systemic efficiency? Is responsiveness to profit an adequate alternative to the wider social goals of equity and the development of learning? (p.393)

The desire to increase opportunities for higher education for overseas students is motivated by several factors. The most obvious is economic contributions by International students and this is very significant. International students contribute over US$ 13 billion annually to the United States economy, more than US$ 3.7 billion to the Australian economy, US$ 3.5 billion to the Canadian economy and more than US$ 1.5 billion annually to the United Kingdom (Arthur 2004, pp.1-2, Andrade 2006, pp.132-133).
In conclusion, commodification is forced on and taken up by universities as a quick fix to the dwindling funds and resources that they face. As gleaned from the discussion, the repercussions accruing from this are enormous: the poor will eventually be closed out from education as it becomes too expensive. Viewing students as clients and education as commodity for sale risks making institutions lose their primary intellectual and equity functions, leading instead to ‘cheapening’ of certificates awarded to students and to widening of the socio-economic gap, rather than bridging between people. It, therefore, calls for the setting up of some control over the growth of commodification of education.

3.4 Internationalization of Education

In this section, I will discuss the historical development of international education, current trends, sources of international students and challenges associated with internationalization of education. Arthur (2004) describes internationalization of education as the process of integrating a globalization dimension into the teaching and learning, research and service functions of university or college (Arthur 2004, p.3). Liddicoat et al (2003) point out that

International education often seems to mean inter-national education and global education implies portable education for activity in a globalizing economy and training students for global citizenship. (p.65)

What makes an institution international? According to Hayden and Thomson (2000) an institution becomes international not because of the nationalities of the
students, nor with the make up of the teaching staff and certainly not with the location of the physical plant. However, this concept of international education rests in the ability of the individuals in the institution’s community to prepare overseas students to successfully integrate and have a positive transformative contribution to the global environment and, thus, combining the two concepts of internationalization and globalization of education (Hayden and Thomson 2000, p.67).

International education is a relatively untapped resource which prepares students for diverse cultural and professional practices in a global economy (Arthur 2004, p.2, Carrol and Ryan 2005, p.109). Andrade (2006, p.133) points out that internationalization also contributes to inter-cultural learning, creates international business and trade connections, and promotes foreign policy interests. Furthermore, International education prepares students for future careers that involve living, learning and working with people from other cultures. International students may remain in the overseas country after graduation to fill positions for which few nationals are qualified (Arthur 2004, p.2, Carrol and Ryan 2005, p.110, Andrade 2006, p.133). Where do international students come from and what percentages of these students does Australia receive? This will be discussed in the next section.
3.4.1 Sources of International Students

According to Williams (1989, pp.3-4), in the mid 1980’s almost 75 per cent of the foreign students in higher education were enrolled in the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada and U.S.S.R.. Europe as a whole provided 17 per cent and America 20 per cent of the students studying in foreign universities.

Williams (1989) cites figures from the 1980s showing that the largest proportion of foreign students studying in universities abroad came from Asia with approximately 43 per cent of the world’s totals. Africa contributed only about 19 per cent of the world’s international students. Based on proportion per country, approximately 40 per cent of African international students were enrolled in France, 20 per cent in the United States, 4-5 per cent in both the United Kingdom and Belgium and 3 per cent in Germany and Canada respectively. In Australia, however, 75 per cent of foreign students come from Asia (Williams 1989, p.4).

Many developed countries are competing to attract greater numbers of international students to join their educational programs in order to make valuable education and economic contributions (Arthur 2004, Andrade 2006). According to Arthur (2004), the United States of America led the world in terms of the numbers of students involved in International education whereby enrolments in the 2001-2002 stood at over 580,000 overseas students. The United Kingdom followed with about 200,000 international students representing 12 per cent of the entire
student population at colleges and universities. Further, Arthur (2004) states that Canada’s enrolment of international students had fluctuated in the past five years, but had increased to more than 110,000 in 2004. According to I.D.P. (2004) Australia had experienced continued growth in international student numbers and in the year 2004, with more than 200,000 international students enrolled in education providers. During the 2004 period, African countries that registered very high annual rates of growth in student numbers were Kenya with a growth rate of 27.5 per cent, Botswana with 26.6 per cent and Zimbabwe with 21.3 per cent (I.D.P. 2004, pp.3-4). Having discussed some of the positive attributes, we shall now turn to some of the challenges facing international education.

3.4.2 Challenges of Internationalization of Education

Arthur (2004, pp.47-49) states that commercialization of education continues to present a critical and controversial direction in the future of internationalization of education (as discussed earlier under commodification of education, 3.3). This has raised several concerns. One of these concerns is the way international student recruitment is being managed. There are calls for governments to step up their involvement in order to avoid further abuse and also an overriding concern that the economic value of international students is driving internationalization without resources allocated to ensure adequate university infrastructure. Another concern raised by academics is the maintenance of standards and quality in academic curriculum. Many international students report difficulties with
academic work due to different approaches to teaching and learning (Carrol and Ryan 2005, p.150). Lack of preparation is another concern raised by academic and student support personnel. They state that they do not receive adequate preparation on how to instruct, supervise and advise international students (Arthur 2004, p.4). Andrade (2006, p.133) points out that there is concern that institutions of higher learning simply admit foreign students and expect them to adjust to life in a new country and education system without an appropriate support program.

In response to the growing involvement in international education, institutions are examining ways to build infrastructure that will foster academic and support programs for international students (Liddicoat et al 2003, p.67, Arthur 2004, p.7, Carrol and Ryan 2005, pp.112-113). According to Liddicoat et al (2003) modification of curricular is being done by universities in order to maximize sales to international markets and university lecturers are addressing the question of quality and competency through altering the order of presentation of curricular for different audiences. They suggest the inclusion of more international examples in the curricular and openness to cultural pluralism (Liddicoat et al 2003, p.69).

Hayden and Thomson (2000, p.74) state that international curriculum should meet specific academic and emotional needs of international students. This might include new approaches to the problem of how to teach international students
who have acquired bad learning habits in their home institutions and calls for courses to be taught differently so that students from diverse cultures can learn.

Changes should also be made on assessment methods of international students, such as through evaluation of cross-cultural communication skills linked to international standards (Liddicoat et al 2003, p.69). Carrol and Ryan (2005, p.126) suggest assessment through asking students to self-evaluate the development of their international perspectives. Liddicoat et al (2003) indicate that essays may be written in the international students’ best language and that there should be less emphasis on correct English, in favor of a much greater emphasis on argumentation. These ideas raise more questions than answers; is it feasible to employ many lecturers for every overseas student? How will academic standards be set? How will science based courses be taught in languages that are not well developed? The authors also state that university lecturers should be trained to consider cultural differences both when presenting information and choosing modes of educational delivery. Liddicoat et al (2003, pp.71-72) recommend that lecturers should also know major languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, German and French, in order to be able to assess students who are more proficient in these languages than English.

Counseling services are essential at university in order to understand and resolve unique issues and problems affecting international students. Counselors have a very important role to play in helping international students to cope with transition
and loss of support systems and to build local networks that support their academic achievements (Arthur 2004, p.8, Andrade 2006, p.142).

It has come out clearly that although the internationalization of education has its advantages, there are many problems associated with it. These challenges threaten the success of international students and educational programs, therefore requiring concerted effort by those concerned in order to address these challenges.

3.5 Globalization and Education

I will discuss aspects and features of globalization and describe the relationship and impact of globalization on education in this section. There has been and continues to be enormous debate about the nature and meaning of globalization. According to Dale (1999) globalization is a phenomenon that emerged from the post-war economic and political settlements that were centred on a set of international financial agreements and institutions known as the Bretton Woods. Mazrui (1999) views United States, being the only super-power in post-cold war era, as central to globalization process and that globalization has widened the gap of the privileges and opportunities between the South and the North (developing and developed worlds). Block and Cameron (2002, p.32) view globalization as “an ongoing process linked to capitalism and characterized by a dense and fluid network of global flows divided into five dimensions referred to as ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes”.

Ethnoscapes refer to the flow of people (such as students, tourists, immigrants, refugees) across national borders. Technoscapes involve the rapid movements of high and low technologies between multinational, national, and government organizations. Finanscapes denote the flow of money through currency markets and stock exchanges and mediascapes refer both to information technologies and to the images of the world they create. Ideoscapes indicate ideological discourse concerning freedom and democracy (Block and Cameron 2002).

Globalization, as argued by Papastephenou (2005) is an empirical phenomenon that has structurally transformed the world economic systems with the compression of time and space through advances in technology and communication. The writer argues that with its multi-dimensionality and chaotic force of its effects, globalization denotes the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, and of a board of directors. The idea of a lack of a centre tends to contradict the argument put forth by Mazrui (2004, pp.14-16) that America is central to the globalization process. Despite its global flow, globalization has not managed to render nation states obsolete; however, it has not brought benefits to smaller and poor countries as well. But its impact has been on both the content and form of policy making procedures and outcomes of all nation states. Globalization induces paradigm shifts in national policy-making assumptions (Dale 1999, p.11, Papastephenou 2005, p.534). Papastephenou (2005), in reference to the negative impact of globalization, argues that
Globalization puts heterogeneity and particularity under threat by imposing a single dominant culture as the model of all operations. It is a state of affairs in which the globe is the essential unit of operation of some human activity and where this activity is ideally conducted in terms of single universal system of thought, techniques and modes of communication.... The global network of communication, acclaimed as gateway to a new and unheard of freedom, is clearly very selectively used; it is a narrow cleft in the thick wall, rather than a gate. (p.537)

Another consequence of globalization is the way supranational organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.), respond to common problems affecting states in a globalized context. Dale (1999) states that these supranational organizations, such as O.E.C.D., work predominantly through agenda setting strategies, for example, their major documents indicate to member nations the likely future directions in a wide variety of policy fields. According to Dale (1999, p.13), the “O.E.C.D attempts to develop international indicators of and for education systems that go well beyond its stated function of meeting the growing demands for more and better information about the quality of education. It has clear implications for the goals as well as the process of policy” on global education.

What are the effects of globalization on education? Howard (2005) declares that globalization impacts on education on two levels. First, it has introduced universal education which comes with issues such as equity, quality and democratic
governance. Secondly, it has introduced changes in the world that have arisen from the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies whereby new patterns of demand challenge those of the past. Marginson (1999) argues that globalization creates new potentials and limitations in educational institutions and programs and that its effects are complicated. Similarly, Papastephenou (2005, p.538) points out that education is sitting in an unfamiliar and interesting position in the face of globalization. The author views education as unsure of its direction regarding globalization and attributes this to the tensions between the global and the local, and “unity and difference that mark globalist discourse”. Howard (2005) has illustrated these challenges, by citing the case of Malawi

Learning to transform information into new knowledge and to transfer new knowledge into applications has become more important than memorizing specific information. The global focus is on how to problem solve, access and use information, crystallize issues, formulate and test hypothesis, plan action, reflect and evaluate for renewed action. These skills presuppose a literate nation that possesses a high competence in communication skills, the ability to work in a team, mentoring, creativity, resourcefulness, flexibility and visioning…These global changes are challenging the traditional boundaries of time and space. (Howard 2003, p.3)

Papastephenou (2005) indicates that globalization threatens traditional forms and structures of pedagogy and may eventually render them obsolete. According to
Dale (1999), educational curricular shows signs of becoming common across the world. This process occurs through the work of international organizations such as United Nations International Children’s Fund (U.N.I.C.E.F.) and United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (U.N.E.S.C.O.) which are arms of the United Nations. These organizations operate to bring about congruent policy changes by making particular broad policy principles a requirement of membership of the particular sector of the international community they represent (Dale 1999, pp.13-14). The extent to which global education curricular has become uniform, Papastephenou (1999, p.544) argues, is contestable, but the fact that globalization imposes a kind of world culture is evident. The author further states that global education curricular “favors unity rather than plurality because it applies across the world irrespective of national, economic, political and cultural difference”.

Marginson (1999) points out that although education retains its key role in the formation of personal skills, including skills required to operate in the global environment, the hopes of national governments that education will usher in a new wave of economic prosperity and success, are doomed to fail. This failure is due to the fact that education cannot, in itself, generate capital or create wealth, unless it becomes a fully fledged market commodity. The inevitable economic failure of education is associated with credentialism and demands of educators for more resources to fulfill their multiplying tasks, especially during this time
when many governments are cutting down expenditure on education (Marginson 1999, p.29).

According to Papastephenou (2005), globalization, through market imperialism, is guilty of vocationalization of higher education, privatization of educational responsibility and benefits, dependence of accountability on educational outcomes and competitive marketization of educational institutions and their services. As a result of governments cutting down expenditure in higher education, these institutions are forced to find ways to raise their own funds. Marginson (1999) has hinted that these institutions raise finances through fee-based international education, research, consultancy for global companies and the growth of virtual delivery and interactive modes. The emergence of global education markets, Marginson (1999) argues, is dividing the global education players into global and nation-specific institutions.

The emerging global elite (particularly in business training) is already using the global institutions while the large majority remain mired in the more impoverished and more regulated nation-specific institutions. How the national institutions will secure the political levers to challenge the structure of privilege enjoyed by the global institutions is not yet clear (Marginson 1999, p.30). According to Papastephenou (2005), education that is turned into a commodity becomes instrumental to goods which lie outside the realm of knowledge and rational or critical understanding. The author goes on to state that internationalization of
higher education is counter-ethical and culturally hegemonic, as it may not be sensitive to cultures into which it is being marketed. Papastephenou (2005) has identified one of the effects of commodification of education as linguistic imperialism operating in educational institutions worldwide and endangering linguistic diversity and plurality of nation states. A vivid example is the use and effect of the English language in many learning institutions around the world.

From the foregoing discussion, globalization has emerged as a controversial phenomenon which started from post world war economic and political settlements. It is linked to global flows of people, technologies, finances, information and ideology. The world economic systems are undergoing structural transformation, the gap between the rich has been widened, universal education is being implemented through common curricular and the construction of knowledge economies and traditional forms and structures of pedagogy are threatened. Education has become a market commodity as institutions try to raise operational finances as a result of governments cutting their budgetary allocations to higher education. Globalization of education is not sensitive to different cultures and interferes with issues such as language diversity and plurality.

The next chapter will discuss research methodology employed for this project.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This Chapter describes in four sections the rationale for choosing a non-positivist, methodology and qualitative approaches to data generation and interpretation. The philosophy underpinning this study comes from a constructivist epistemology and leads into interpretivism as a theoretical perspective.

4.1 Non-Positivist Paradigms

Paradigms are generally understood as worldviews (Caulley 1992, Freebody 2003, Mertens 2005). The two main paradigms that can be identified are positivist and non-positivist. Positivist inquirers assume that the study of physical objects as in natural sciences is similar to the study of human behavior and hence that similar methods can be used. On the other hand, non-positivist enquirers argue that the study of physical objects is radically different from the study of human behavior and that human social sciences start from a different paradigm and use different methods differently (Giddens 1979, Caulley 1992, Freebody 2003, Mertens 2005).

Freebody (2003) argues that in terms of the positivist paradigm is incompatible with the later non-positivist paradigms that developed in direct opposition to it. He argues that this distinction (based on natural verses the human sciences) is by
far the most important distinction, and the subsequent distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches matters if the same incompatibility of paradigms and sciences applies.

The positivist claim that although humans have minds, their behavior results from responses to external stimuli and forces. On the other hand non-positivists emphasize that human beings have consciousness and thus should strive towards a description and understanding of their own consciousness. Positivists perceive human beings as objects and underplay elements such as language, culture, or the social rules or norms which may govern human behavior. The non-positivists stress the fact that the actions of human beings are best understood in terms of their socio-cultural contexts (Caulley 1992).

In their inquiry, Caulley (1992) points out, the positivists employ paper and pencil instruments and claim to provide objectivity in collecting data, while non-positivists emphasize humans as instruments and the elements of interpretation and subjectivity. According to Giddens (1979), non-positivists are linked with inquiry in the social sciences, whereas positivists are aligned more with the natural science mode of inquiry. Social science methods of inquiry, as pointed out by Caulley (1992), are different from those of the natural sciences.

The difference between the social and the natural world is that the latter does not constitute itself as meaningful. The meanings it has are produced by men in the course of their endeavors to understand or explain it for themselves. Social life of
which these endeavors are a part, on the other hand, is produced by its component actors, precisely in terms of their active constitution of frames of meanings whereby they organize their experience. (Caulley 1992, p.79)

Human beings, unlike objects, have intentions and goals, and their behaviors change according to the situations around them and through their interactions with the world (Giddens 1979, Caulley 1992). According to Caulley (1992) human beings are able to respond and give meaning to the complexities of life. Drawing from the concepts involved in the positivist and non-positivist paradigms, the philosophical grounding for this study will now be discussed.

4.2 Epistemological Issues

Although the term epistemology carries many definitions, I have decided to embrace Crotty’s definition. According to Crotty (1998, p.8), epistemology is concerned with the provision of a philosophical grounding for knowledge and how we can ensure that this knowledge is adequate and legitimate. The epistemology underlying the process of this project is constructionism. Constructionism insists that human knowledge cannot exist in accurate representation or faithful copying of an external reality (apart from the subject’s experiences). Knowledge is an unending series of processes of inner construction (Phillips and Early 2000, p.43). By contrast an objectivism epistemology claims that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists apart from any consciousness (Crotty 1998 p.8). A constructionist conception of knowledge draws attention to the fact that different people will construct different systems of meaning in relation to the same
phenomena. Further, this is cultural, what we find when we move from one cultural system including education, to another.

Nevertheless, it is important to make a distinction between constructionism and constructivism. Constructivism is the meaning-making activity of the individual’s mind as opposed to constructionism which focuses on the collective generation of meaning (Crotty 1998, pp.42-43, Phillips and Early 2000, p.45). Constructivism is concerned with the uniqueness of individual experience while constructionism supposes that culture shapes our experience and the making of meaning. Crotty (1998, p.53) asserts that “meaningful symbols constitute culture as an indispensable guide to human behavior. We, therefore, depend on culture to direct our behavior and to organize our experience”.

This aspect of constructionism is suited for the present inquiry and is developed more in the following theoretical perspectives and methodology sections. A constructionist epistemology provides a philosophical ground for the research process as it tries to find out the kinds of knowledge that are adequate and legitimate. In this constructionist thinking, my participants and I will engage in interpreting experiences in order to understand them. I would therefore take an interpretive stance in focusing on the historically and culturally influenced interpretation. The next section will discuss theoretical perspectives underpinning this study.
4.3 Theoretical Perspectives

Interpretivism

Crotty (1998, p.66) uses the term theoretical perspective to refer to the philosophical stance underlying a methodology. It provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its criteria. Consequently, different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world.

Interpretivism is a distinctive theoretical perspective which relies upon a constructionist epistemology. Interpretivism, a non-positivist theoretical perspective, looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (Crotty 1998, p.67). Crotty (1998) notes that interpretivism is linked to the thoughts of Max Weber who saw human sciences as concerned with understanding as opposed to explaining as found in natural sciences. This led to the different methods employed according to the sciences, that is, positivism and non-positivism. Social sciences tend to focus on aspects that are uniquely individual and qualitative whereas natural sciences focus more on abstract phenomena that are measurable, quantifiable and empirical (Crotty 1998, p.68). Although, I have chosen interpretivism as a theoretical perspective for this inquiry, there are other perspectives that can be employed as philosophical stance underlying methodology. These are symbolic interactionism whose key notion involves understanding situations from the point of view of actors in them (Crotty 1998, p.75). The third perspective is phenomenology which aims at making our direct experience of phenomena as close as possible and
accumulation of cultural meanings in order to realize new and richer meanings (Crotty 1998, p.79). Having looked at the paradigm, epistemology and theoretical perspective of my study, I will now discuss the methodology that I have employed in this project.

4.4 Methodology

Bell (1987) describes methodology as involving concepts concerning the ways of answering particular questions. This includes planning, designing, collecting data and analyzing and interpreting data. The choice of methodology depends on issues such as the data that the researcher is looking for, the time and resources available. In this research, I have chosen a non-positivist paradigm and adopted qualitative approaches to data generation and interpretation. According to Merriam et al (2002) the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is solidly constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. It is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and interactions. It is not an attempt to predict what may happen in the future (Guba and Lincoln 1983, Merriam et al 2002, pp.4-5).

Palmer (2005) argues that different people are drawn to different research approaches and techniques for reasons deriving from their world view rather than by pure research questions. Qualitative researchers believe that different stories can emerge from a research site depending on the interaction of the researcher's subjectivity with participants, events and situations. There is no one correct
method but researchers must be prepared to justify their choices (Palmer 2005, p.122). Qualitative research focuses on the perspectives of the people involved in the study (emic) or insiders’ perspective (Harris 1976, Holloway 1997). In this case researchers explore the experiences of the participants and closely study the meanings and interpretations that the participants attach to their actions. Therefore qualitative researchers strive to understand the research question from the viewpoints of the participants rather than from their own viewpoints.

While studying phenomena, qualitative researchers take into account the context and culture in which the participants’ actions, perceptions and experiences are shaped. Through understanding the context of the participants’ lives holistically, qualitative researchers can locate the actions and perceptions of the participants and grasp the meanings that they communicate to them.

Holloway (1997) points out that a qualitative research paradigm allows researchers to go beyond reporting surface phenomena to giving detailed portrayals of the participants’ experiences. If the participants present their narratives in a rich and descriptive manner, it allows researchers to develop conceptual and analytical description from the data and the context. Researchers will then go on to the interpretation and reflective representation of the actions of others (Holloway 1997).
For this study, qualitative methods are most conducive to achieving an understanding of the experiences of Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University. This approach acknowledges the educational and related history of the participants and allows me to attend to participants’ accounts of actions and events, perceptions and experiences in terms of both Kenyan and Australian education systems. Through qualitative research I will grasp more of the complexity of and gain a holistic view of participant accounts of their personal experiences in learning in Kenya and Australia. Furthermore, I believe that a well described portrait of an individual can provide insight into how that person’s experience of studying at La Trobe University have been shaped by their prior learning experiences in Kenyan schools and colleges.

4.5 Methods: Case Studies

I have decided to use the case study approach as a method of research to enable me to seek an in-depth understanding of overseas Kenyan student perceptions of learning styles, language and cultural factors at La Trobe University. I will also seek to understand the influence of prior learning in Kenyan schools and colleges.

A case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomena or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community (Merriam et al 2002, p.8, Freebody 2003, p.81). Bogden and Biklen (1997, p.62) describe a case study as a detailed examination of one setting or a single subject, a single
depository of documents or one particular event. Freebody (2003) discusses the purpose of case study as exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. It is exploratory in generating field work data prior to any predetermined research questions, it is explanatory when research is aimed at causality and it is descriptive when research requires the investigator to begin with a descriptive theory (Freebody 2003, p.82). Merriam (2002, p.178) argues that a case study has a finite quality about it in terms of time, space and arguments comprising the case. Once a case has been located, it follows that in-depth observations or interviews and generation of data of a single case can provide insights in the class of events from which the case is drawn. A case study requires the collection of very extensive data in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied (Borg and Gall 1989, p.402).

In the next section, I will discuss how I selected the participant sample for this project.

4.5.1 Selection of Participants
In relation to the topic of this study, the goal of the selection was to choose participants from a particular group of Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University – two male and two female students. Another selection criterion was a person’s willingness to be interviewed by me and to reflect upon and talk about educational and related experiences in Kenya and Australia. Another factor was an indication that that person would be available for full participation in my
As a result of the above criteria, four Kenyan students studying in various years at La Trobe University were selected and then interviewed twice. The second interview provided clarification of issues raised in the first interview or not covered in the first interview. The reason for choosing two females and two males was to allow for potential gender differences in their experiences of education and other related challenges in Kenya and Australia.

Abby, a single male student, 26 years of age was doing a Bachelor of Biological Sciences at La Trobe University. He was in third year of his studies. He volunteered to train as a primary school teacher in Kenya and did computer studies at a college in Kenya before coming to Australia. Iris, a 25 year old single lady, was in the third year of a Bachelor of Arts in Development studies at La Trobe University. Before coming to Australia, she worked at a family business and also enrolled part-time to do an introduction to computer studies. Gideon a single male student, 30 years of age was doing a Bachelor of Commerce and when interviewed, had just finished 4 months in Australia. Apparently he has had no work history and no other qualifications after secondary school. Another participant was Kate, who was 28 years of age and married. She was in the third year of a Bachelor of Nursing degree. Before coming to Australia she had enrolled to do a Diploma of nursing which she completed, but had no worked in Kenya. The next section will discuss the interview-based data for this study.
4.5.2 Data Generation

The aim of this study is to understand the experiences and challenges facing overseas Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University. It is aimed at finding out how prior learning and teaching styles, learning resources, culture and English language proficiency may have affected students’ learning and living at La Trobe University. An open-ended, semi structured interview was used for this purpose. This method has the potential to gather significant information in relation to participants’ experiences and perceptions of studies and cultural interactions while in Australia as well as in Africa. Before undertaking this interview with the participants, I read many books relevant to the research topic. I also designed a host of open-ended questions covering a range of topic areas concerning the type of schools, private or public, that these participants attended, experiences encountered in terms of cultural practices, learning and teaching approaches, and language used in teaching and communication. Given that I share the same educational and cultural background with these participants, I was cautious not to bring my biases and assumptions into the process of designing the interview questions and into the later interviewing.

In order to empathize with the thinking and feelings of the participants, I tried to develop rapport with them before the interviews were conducted. According to Bogden and Biklen (1982, p.135), before beginning interviews, it is important to have small talk or chit-chat with interviewees, which serves to develop rapport.
You search for common ground, for a topic that you have in common, for a place to begin building a relationship.

Minichiello et al (1990) point out that an interview is a face-to-face verbal interchange in which the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinion or belief from participants. I used broad topics to guide the interview and the content of the interview focused on the issues that were central to the research questions. I allowed for flexibility during the interview questioning and discussion.

I conducted interviews with the four participants in English, which had some limitations with the participants (Gideon, Iris, Abby and Kate) due to their lack of fluency. As the interview proceeded, some questions that I asked participants were misunderstood and the answers given were not what I wanted to know, so I had to rephrase questions to such participants. William (1994) argues that questions must be understood by the respondents and answered as intended.

If respondents typically search for contextual clues to help them interpret a question, different respondents may attend to different clues so that they end up with quite different interpretations of the question…a question must be understood by the respondent in the way the researcher intended and the answer must be understood by the researcher in the way the respondent intended.

(pp.21-23)
I interviewed each of the participants twice. The first interview covered topics of Australian educational experiences, orientation, planning for overseas travel and study and educational experiences in Kenyan schools. I enquired about the participant’s hopes, aspirations and suggestions on the support they needed to do well at La Trobe University. The second interview was to clarify certain issues that came up during the first interview. Although I tried to allow for participant accounts to flow smoothly and not to constrain their responses to my interview direction, I realized that it was not possible with my participants who were not fluent in English. This difficulty with interviewing in the English language was evident in the brief answers that they gave and, therefore, I had to do a lot of probing or rephrasing of questions. In some instances participants were not comfortable with questions such as about their academic performance; whether they have ever visited a counselor and what changes they suggest that the university should make to enable them succeed. Each interview was tape recorded and immediately transcribed after interview. I asked the participants to read the interview transcripts and to clarify any points that were not clear. They made several corrections and signed to show agreement with the information. The next part of this study will look at how the generated data was analyzed.

4.5.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts and field notes and other materials that I had accumulated. This was done to increase my own understanding of the data and to enable me to
present what I had discovered to others (Bogden and Biklen 1992, p.153). According to Bogden and Biklen (1992, p.153), data analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned.

In this research I have used thematic analysis to work on the data. This is what Boyatzis (1998) describes as a process for encoding qualitative information. Thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998), is done by searching for a list of themes, a complex model with themes, indicators and qualifications that are related. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomena (Boyatzis 1998, pp.vi-vii). I scanned for themes emanating from participants’ responses. Some of these themes related directly to the question set at hand, and other themes spanned question sets. Full analysis was completed after all data generation had been done.

4.6 Methodological Constraints on the Present Study

Finally, in this chapter the limitations of the present project will be discussed. The first contrast relates to generalizability from four case studies. The case study approach has been chosen to provide in-depth understanding of individual students that is not feasible with large numbers of participants, as a survey approach might be. As a result, the aim is not to generalize from four case studies to a wider international Kenyan student population. Similarly, four
participants cannot be taken as representative of Kenyan students in general or of Kenyan students studying abroad. Although this may be deemed as a limitation of the present study, the four case studies can be used to suggest patterns that may be worth exploring in further research.

The second contrast relates to the range of experiences represented by the sample of four students. The participants of this study are of similar age group and three of the four were doing their third year of undergraduate studies and the other participant, Gideon, was in the first semester of his first year at La Trobe at the time of interview. These students may share some common experiences with other overseas Kenyan students with similar age group, life and educational experiences. This may also serve as a reflection of some aspects of the Kenyan educational system and socio-cultural practices. However, considering that the Kenyan educational system has undergone many changes in its social, political and economic aspects, (as a result of changes in government policies) these changes may have impacted on teaching methods, curriculum structure and resources. Younger generations may have quite different experiences from the four participants. Future research should aim to recruit participants from different levels of studies and age groups to enable comparative studies.

The third constraint, already mentioned, relates to the use of English. Although I decided to interview in English, I realized that some of the participants were not fluent enough to conduct long conversations and could not express their ideas
properly. Their lack of English proficiency, as a result of English being their second language, meant that some the participants gave short answers to the questions and I had to probe and rephrase questions in order for them to understand and answer.

Allied to this some, of the respondents who were participating for the first time in research interviews were suspicious and apprehensive especially when asked questions about the way they were taught and what they thought should be changed by the university to enable them to succeed in learning. This is in spite of repeated assurance of confidentiality. Perhaps they were apprehensive that what was discussed might count against them later, in some way.

Finally, the issue of timing was a problem because this interview was done when students were preparing for examinations and therefore it was difficult to set the time for our meeting. Preparation for examinations made some of my participants unwilling to spend much of their precious time for interview.

Having looked at some limitations of this study, the next chapter presents an analysis of the data.
CHAPTER FIVE
FOUR CASE STUDIES

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the experiences of four Kenyan students who are studying in different year levels at La Trobe University. Focus is on understanding their experiences, beginning with individual accounts of learning at La Trobe University, their preparation for transitional phase of coming to Australia and their educational history. Finally this analysis of the interview data will be followed by a discussion of some important issues that have emerged from the four case studies.

Referencing of quotations from the interviews indicates the source, whether from interview 1 [1] or interview 2 [2] and the page number from the transcript. Where spoken words were not heard clearly, a possible wording is suggested and shown by ( ).

5.1 Case Study I: Iris “A wingless young bird”

Iris is a female student who was born in Kenya 25 years ago. She has three sisters and two brothers. Iris parents are well to do, according to Kenyan standards. She undertook all her primary and secondary education in Kenya. In addition to helping the family run their business, she enrolled part time to do computer studies. Iris came to Australia in 2003 to study for a Bachelor of Arts in
Development Studies and was in final year of her studies during the time of the interview.

Overview

Iris describes her educational experiences as “a young bird” that cannot fly because it “lacks wings” (interview 2, p.7). As for Iris, having “wings” means having an advantaged position which enables her to achieve her pursuits. On the other hand being “wingless” and not able to fly, limits opportunities for Iris. Iris believes that being young does not matter, so long as she has “wings” that enable her to fly and “to learn new things everyday”. Iris implies that having “wings” means; a privileged background which enabled her to get a good education in Kenya and abroad, a supportive educational experience whereby she is assisted to overcome challenges, and a liberating culture which regards females (like her) and males as equals and provides opportunities for both.

La Trobe University

Orientation at La Trobe University was a challenge to Iris’ adjustment to living and studying abroad. She points out that an orientation of only two days was not “enough to be able to get me going” (interview 1, p.4). She felt that two days orientation limited her preparations to face challenges ahead such as typing her work, presentations during tutorials and time scheduled assignments.

My educational experience at La Trobe (University) is really, really challenging having in mind that I studied all my other time in a country (Kenya) where we
would write our essays by hand, you wouldn’t stand and present in tutorials, you
are not expected (required) to hand in your assignments at a particular time.
(Interview 1, p.4)

Teaching and learning styles at La Trobe University presented a challenge to Iris
at the start of her studies. In reference to internationalization of education, Ryan
(2005) and Andrade (2006), state that international students find difficulties in
their studies because institutions of higher learning just admit them without
appropriate support programs. Iris’ previous study experiences in Kenya were
different. As stated by Iris earlier (interview 1, p.2), teachers controlled all the
learning and students were passive learners. However, after some time, Iris got
used to this new system of teaching and the challenges disappeared. In fact this
kind of learning empowered Iris, as if giving her “wings” to fly.

You can be able to interact with the lecturer the way you can interact with your
fellow friend, it is not that when you see the lecturer you just assume that the
lecturer knows everything, you can be able to challenge the lecturer or you can
be able to give your own view, you can be able to argue out and that way it
opened up my mind. (Interview 1, p.4)

When Iris arrived at La Trobe University, she realized that there were a lot of
resources for gaining information and digesting it, but she found difficulties using
these resources herself. This situation was saved by Iris receiving help.
You have books whenever you want, you have the internet and like you don’t have always to be at the library to be able to access…the resources (which) became handy and if you are willing to study and whatever and there is always help whether you are in the library or whatever. (Interview 1, pp.4-5)

Iris found the English language as spoken at La Trobe University a challenge, especially when she first came. Spoken English “was really hard” because, while in Kenya, she “thought English was the same everywhere”. Iris describes classroom learning as intimidating especially during tutorials when her presentations were not understood by fellow students or lecturers. She attributes this to her different English accent.

I didn’t know how to speak in tutorials because I really felt intimidated when I say something and they would say “can you repeat what you are saying”…they couldn’t understand my (English) accent …on the first tutorials I found it very hard because I could not get the slang that they used or even the (English) accent of the lecturers. (Interview 1, p.5)

According to Iris receiving “a lot of help” from friends, tutors and other resource persons helped her to settle and adjust to the new system of education. She points out some of the things that overseas Kenyan students need to know, such as learning how to use a computer, understanding Australian English and having more orientation time soon after arrival. Iris suggests that La Trobe University can, if need be, charge an extra fee for the above mentioned services as they
empower Kenyan students in their studies. The acquisition of these services, using Iris’ metaphor of a young bird growing “wings”, could enable Iris and other Kenyan students to reach academic success at La Trobe University. As for any new experience, Iris suggests that the University should “give them (overseas Kenyan students) more time really, to adjust to all the new things” (interview 2, p.6).

After completing her studies, Iris hopes to “get a good job and a better living” which will enable her to “achieve other personal ambitions”. The “good job” and “better living” will put Iris at a privileged position whereby she will be able to attain her other dreams.

I may not be sure at this (time), but once I finish my studies, I might achieve my dreams as planned and, although the first instances were pretty difficult; I think my efforts have paid off well. I am almost finishing actually, and hope to get a good job and a better living which will help me achieve other personal ambitions. (Interview 2, p.6)

In order for Iris to achieve these dreams, she has to succeed in her studies. This success depends on the availability of certain things such as

Good facilities, friendly lecturers and sheer hard work that I put in during my studies here at La Trobe University...with persistence and time management it
has bore fruits…. I can not forget the good friends who helped me a great deal.

(Interview 2, p.6)

When Iris arrived in Australia, she was shocked by different cultural practices from those she was used to in Kenya. She had expected to arrive and fit into the Australian way of life so easily. A lot of things that were so normal for Iris in Kenyan society became “totally different”. It was normal in Kenya for people to jump queues (with impunity) in banks, for passengers to stand or hold onto metal rails in overcrowded public vehicles, for people to ask for directions from strangers, who were more than happy to help and to have confidence about things one is used to. From my conversation with Iris, she expected to find the same things happening here and Iris was surprised to see a very organized system of doing things in Australia. For example, people showed good manners by queuing, well ordered public transport and many places with public maps showing directions to places.

It wasn't what I expected…it is termed as culture shock, yeah. I mean, like it is not what you expect you know, you know, you just expect to arrive and you know, but the moment you arrive, you find totally, it is totally different…you don’t know who to ask, where to go or may be if you know things in this way, people would look at you like, I mean, what was so normal in my own society or my culture, it would be viewed as totally different (here). (Interview 1, p.3)
Iris stated that “being courageous enough” and positive enabled her to overcome cultural differences. She would “never compare the two cultures (Kenyan and Australian) because they are different, and one needs to only appreciate other people’s ways of life... because there is something good in both” (interview 2, p.6). Iris had now realized that social practices, common in Kenya and their reverse in Australia, are fertile learning ground for overseas Kenyan students. These students have the potential, in future, to change their country’s bad social practices. Iris advice to her Kenyan “sisters” is for them to embrace western education because it will liberate them from inequalities inherent in Kenyan society. She says “this place is very liberating” and that “it makes female Kenyan students feel respected as human beings” (interview 2, p.7). She is referring here to the gender equity which has freed girls and women in Australian society and across many other western countries.

**Transition Period**

Having parents who provided for Iris’ social and financial needs, and teachers who provided for her educational needs, made her dread the idea of living and studying abroad. In addition to this, Iris did not get proper preparation for overseas studies which she felt could have given her more confidence. Iris says “I didn’t know I would survive” and a few months after arrival in Australia “I thought of really going back, yeah” (interview 1, p.4).
On arrival at La Trobe, Iris had experienced loss of familiar ways of doing things, a process of transition (Arthur, 2004). She had felt secure in the familiar Kenyan environment with people who had influenced her life positively. Her parents and teachers had supported her through primary and secondary education and she was not used to situations where she was supposed to do things on her own. She relies on past experiences to gauge what she is facing at present, as she says “the way I was brought up to believe” (interview 1, p.4) to show dependence on others for support. ‘Border crossing’ can be a challenging undertaking, with diminishing outcome, rather than enhancing (Reidy, 2006).

**Kenyan Experience**

Iris was lucky and privileged due to her parents having “a bit of money”. This privileged position, like that of a young winged bird enabled Iris to “fly” and enjoy privileges which disadvantaged pupils (wingless young birds) could not receive. This privileged background enabled her to attend “a private school”, not one of the public schools that were for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As a result of Iris’ advantaged background and attendance of a private primary school, her achievements improved. Iris says that achieving good grades in private primary school enabled her to enroll at the Alliance Girls School, one of the best national schools in Kenya. Iris points out that she would have studied in Kenyan universities which are relatively cheaper, but instead opted to come to Australia because her parents were financially able.
I mean there are universities in Kenya and I would have studied there if I wanted to, but what I have come to realize is that in the past most people that have studied in overseas countries…tend to get first priorities in jobs when they come back to Kenya. So I just looked at that and thought may be I would go and study in Australia. (Interview 1, p.3)

Iris points out that her decision to study abroad was so as to “be given first priority” in Kenyan jobs. She regards a La Trobe University education as placing her in a better position to get a job, compared to graduates of Kenyan Universities. I have seen this happen in a majority of government and private employment places in Kenya. In my opinion this is mainly due to corruption and nepotism and not necessarily to preference for degrees from foreign universities. It occurs mostly because the rich send their children abroad for studies and are able to influence jobs for them when they go back home. This may be the idea behind Iris’ argument that Kenyan students who study abroad are preferred by employers.

Iris’ educational “experience in Kenyan schools was really a challenge” because, it was not supportive to her learning. In spite of the fact that she had attended a good school, she had to study a lot of subjects in a short time and was “expected to recall what you’ve learned” (interview 1, p.1), which stifles critical thinking.
Iris undertook many family chores which undermined her studies. She says “the fact I was given much work to do at the expense of my studies, I wasn’t able to perform well in school, not because I wasn’t clever enough but I wasn’t given the chance to perform” (interview 1, p.2) unlike her brothers.

Iris account provides evidence of the general classroom learning situation in Kenyan schools.

We were brought up to look at teachers as a fear factor, when a teacher walks into class, you all go down and you keep quiet, you even are scared to ask questions…when you challenge the teacher everyone will look at you and be like “what do you think you are doing?”…the teacher would just come there and dictate, all these notes, you write them,…and you are expected to reproduce them exactly the way the teacher gave to you in the notes…(if) you haven’t reproduced exactly what’s in the notes, that would make you fail. (Interview 1, p.2)

Another challenge that Iris faced was that learning resources were limited such as no computers, very old books, and the poor teaching of English language. When asked about her experience of English language teaching, Iris said,

You are not encouraged to speak English in a day-to-day basis…, kids go to the extend of speaking their mother tongue, their own tribal (languages) in school…. Sometimes it gets to a point where teachers would translate, when teaching, in
Iris found understanding English as used at La Trobe University especially challenging when she had just arrived. She says “it was really hard” because, while in Kenya, she “thought English was the same everywhere”. She came to realize that there are many variations in spoken English. Iris describes classroom learning as intimidating especially during tutorials where she could not be understood by fellow students and lecturers.

I didn’t know how to speak in tutorials because I really felt intimidated when I say something and they would say “can you repeat what you are saying”…they couldn’t understand my (English) accent. On the first tutorials I found it very hard because I could not get the slang and colloquial that they used or even the (English) accent of the lecturers. (Interview 1, p.5)

Iris states that, being like “a young of a bird without wings is very frustrating” (interview 2, p.7). Perhaps we can generalize that there is much about Kenyan cultural practices that would make female students and young women feel “wingless”, denied the freedom to “fly” and learn new things. As Iris points out, in most Kenyan societies, roles are gendered and girls tend to be given more tasks than the boys. This is a form of inequality that overburdens females and limits their “flying” ability. Girls who are supposed to be concentrating with school work are inundated with lots of house chores whereas it is common for boys to be
discouraged by their mothers from helping with household work. In most Kenyan families boys or males work outside the home and the kinds of work they do allow them some free time to study.

Girls were seen to be the ones that do all the house tasks, before you go to school in the morning you’ve got to clean the house, you’ve to clean the compound, you’ve to cook breakfast and the boys didn’t do all this kind of work…I was being given more, being given more work since girls were considered to be doing everything. (Interview 1, pp 1-2)

Another cultural practice common in Kenya is the respect of adults by the young people. This respect is one sided whereby young people are always seen as inept and naive in their actions whereas the adults are seen as always right in what they say and do, and therefore, as deserving of unchallenged respect from the youth. This practice is transferred to school situation where students are scared of their teachers’ presence in class.

When a teacher walks into class, you all go down and you keep quiet, you even are scared to ask questions. You just feel scared even when, maybe, you have read well and you know that what the teacher is saying is not right…when you challenge the teacher everyone will look at you. (Interview 1, p.2)

In Kenya, it is common practice for parents to continue providing for their children beyond teenage years. This is more common in well to do families where parents
provide most of the needs for their children and do not encourage them to be independent. This might be the reason for Iris’ fear of the unknown in a foreign land where she would be required to be independent. She says “I didn’t know I would survive without my family that I had grown up with for the past 25 years or so” (interview 1, p.3). She muses that she would not imagine herself “going to live alone, leaving my family” (interview 1, p.3). In most western cultures, a young adult of her age would have been to far away place alone and lived without parental support.

5.1.2 Summary
This study reveals that Iris’ was ill-prepared for overseas studies and orientation of only two days was not sufficient to enable her face challenges at La Trobe University. This suggests that the improvement of the above would help overseas students like Iris to adjust faster to studies abroad. Lack of preparation and inadequate orientation would also make for frustration and prolong adjustment periods for overseas students. In turn, this necessitates that the university to treat overseas students as a rich cultural exchange (not ‘consumers’) and provide support services (Arthur, 2004).

Secondly, teacher-centered teaching and learning styles in Kenya, as experienced by Iris, make learners over dependent on the teachers, so that when students are introduced to student-centered teaching and learning styles, they find it hard to be creative and critical in their work. Having been passive learners
in the previous education system, overseas Kenyan students are unlikely to be active participants in class discussions at La Trobe University.

Thirdly, Iris’ case study shows that having experienced inadequate resources in Kenyan schools, it was a challenge on arrival at La Trobe University in learning how to access extensive resources. Since most of the resources were new to Iris, she had to struggle to use them. This issue affected Iris’ academic performance at the beginning but with help from friends and lecturers (interview 1, p.5) she started performing very well.

Fourthly, exposure to poor English language teaching in Kenyan, with few opportunities to develop English skills, made fluency difficult. In her first year of study in Australia, Iris realized that the English accent, slang and colloquial were very different from what she had expected, and in addition to her inadequacy in English language use, greatly affected her participation in class discussions.

Finally, common cultural practices in Kenya encouraged gender inequality whereby girls’ education was affected. As a girl, Iris was given chores that interfered with her studies whereas her brothers’ education was valued and encouraged. In Australia, Iris realized that there is equality and both sexes have opportunities to pursue their interests. This made Iris feel a liberated person and improved her confidence in studies, and in future plans.
5.2 Case Study II: Abby “Walking on a tight rope across a valley”

Abby is a twenty six years old single male, who was born in Kenya in 1980. He has four brothers and two sisters. In Kenya, he attended a co-educational primary school and later went to boys’ secondary boarding school. Before coming to Australia, Abby enrolled for an introduction to computers studies course and also worked as a volunteer primary school teacher. Abby came to Australia in 2004 and enrolled at La Trobe University to do a Bachelor of Biological Sciences. He was in the third year of his course at the time of interview. His ambition was to do well in the field of sciences, especially Chemistry.

Overview

Abby describes his educational experiences to be like “walking on a tight rope across a valley” that requires him to be “focused” and “balanced” in order to be successful (interview 2, p.6). Had Abby not focused his attention to future success by balancing his social and academic activities, he would have definitely failed to achieve success. According to Abby, failure in education is like “falling into a deep valley” where he has no hope of achieving his dreams.

Abby went through difficulties resulting from learning and cultural experiences in Kenya and different educational and cultural experiences in Australia. Abby faced challenges of new experiences when he arrived at La Trobe University such as: inadequate preparation for overseas studies, too short an orientation, lack of
knowledge on how to use resources and differences in the cultures. As a result of commercialization of education, universities are likely to pay less attention to overseas students’ needs (Rikowski, 2002). The other obstacles were associated with Abby’s education in Kenya, such as use of punishment to enforce discipline, teacher-directed teaching and learning, inadequate teaching resources, improper ways of teaching English language and the influence of traditional cultural festivals that youth were forced to attend at the expense of their education. Accordingly, Abby had to “walk on a tight rope” by balancing well and focusing his eyes on the end results.

**La Trobe University Experience**

Preparation for overseas study, according to Abby, was self initiated and inadequate (interview 1, p.3). Abby states that he had to be creative by searching internet for more information about Australia, especially La Trobe University. He says “the only preparation I received was getting to know some computer programs…briefly getting acquainted through computer internet, the Australian culture…and Australian geography” (interview 1, p.3). This concurs with Iris’ experience of inadequate preparation for studying abroad. This is one of the challenges of internationalization of education; student recruitment is being mismanaged leading to inadequate preparation for overseas studies (Arthur, 2004).
On arrival, Abby found it hard to locate important learning places such as classrooms and says “you could not know where to go and what to do, so you spent few weeks struggling (interview 1, p.3).

Another challenge facing Abby was his different English accent which meant that he would not be understood by other students in classes and laboratories. This limited Abby’s participation in classroom discussions and interaction.

The (English) accent, sometimes is a problem, especially when you just arrived, many people do not understand when you speak, sometimes you are forced not to ask questions that you are supposed to ask, so you keep quiet or try your luck and wait if some student asks that (same question), you say Bingo! So it is an obstacle. Sometimes you understand things, but still, if you are talking to someone who is not from the same (country) language, you need clarification for not being well understood”. (Interview 1, p.4)

Abby found out that La Trobe University is well resourced, but it was difficult for him to use the available resources. As a result he had to struggle to learn how to use some of these resources like computers and the library.

Things like computers, yeah, I found these were there (La Trobe University), umm, the way of teaching like overhead projectors, were there, but the things (resources) that students had to use by themselves could be there, but the problem was how to use them. I had to struggle myself to get to know the school (University) around, getting to know the staff, education procedures, getting
different computing programs, especially for my course, getting to use library, umm, finding articles, it was a big struggle. (Interview 1, p.3)

Abby’s experience of such difficulties reminds me of my own when I first arrived at La Trobe University. I had never used a computer and other available resources. I wrote my first assignment by hand and was instructed by my lecturer to hand it in typed. It was a hard and lengthy struggle with computer use and I had to type letter by letter and had to write down, in my diary each new information on computer use given to me by friendly students at the university’s library. Slowly, but carefully, I improved and have been typing all my work since then, an indication of not being prepared for a globalized education.

Abby experienced some cultural differences, “I felt confused about the society around; I asked myself, how would I know the public transport around (laughs)?” (Interview 1, p.3). The usual things such as public transport system worked differently. Abby’s difficulty was getting used to a well advanced and complicated transport system. I remember when I was still new here and had to travel to La Trobe University’s City campus. I used to get lost and arrive in class late. Whenever I asked for directions, I would be given a map to read. I could not comprehend the complicated maze of transport system.

Abby states that it was not easy to find help from other students, “especially if you do not come from the same race” (interview 1, p.3). This again is how I felt when I first came to La Trobe University, but I think this is influenced by culture shock.
rather than racism per se. It is a common practice at university for people to expect every new student to learn by discovery and since everyone seems to be busy, one is bound to conclude that no one is ready to help. Whenever I asked questions of students who had stayed here longer, they would reply “am sorry” or “I do not know”. This can easily be interpreted as a refusal to help or a lack of caring, leaving the new comer feeling frustrated.

Abby points out that, it was common for students at La Trobe University to “hang around with people (of the same race) like them”. In my view, this is true with students from non-western societies as compared to those from western countries. The non-western groups are referred to by Pedersen (1993) as belonging to Gamma cultures and western groups from Alpha cultures. Gamma cultures emphasize the importance of group and welfare guarantees (helping each other), whereas Alpha cultures emphasize individualism.

In addition to the above, Abby mentions that “sometimes there might be someone (student) seated next to you, but they do not speak to you” (interview 1, p.4). Whenever he asked questions, the most likely answers were “they do not know”. This illustrates frustrations that Abby sums up in having to “walk the tight rope” while staying focused. Abby points out that, relationships between male and female students sometimes became sour, and which leads to problems that could affect studies.
Sometimes difficult relationships are the things that may affect studies situation, especially bad relationships (laughs). Sometimes you need relationship with ladies but should not be to some extent that you avoid studies. (Interview 1, p.4)

Asked about what accounts for his success in studies at La Trobe University, Abby stated the following: self determination, not missing classes, seeking for help and good use of resources.

**Transition Period**

Abby states that he was excited about traveling abroad and hoping to get good education. It was hard for him to think of leaving behind his parents, “when it was the day to leave, I felt like I should stay longer and go later” (interview 1, p.3).

On arrival in Australia Abby felt “confused about the society around” (interview 1, p.3). There were challenges to face such as: getting used to complicated transport system; interacting in a culturally appropriate ways with others; different English expressions and ways of speaking and locating and using resources at the university. Abby’s strengths in adjusting were building confidence and making friends with other students,” I just went slowly asking people and the good advantage was people were comfortable with me… and that gave me confidence.” (Interview 1, p.3). To be socialized into a new culture, Reidy (2006) asserts, requires learning various cultural forms such as symbols, language, narrative and practices.
Kenyan Educational Experience

Abby narrates some of the experiences that he encountered while studying in Kenyan schools. In Kenya, Abby’s “early primary school years were so exciting” (interview 1, p.1). This seemed like Abby was still too young to understand the value of education, but was happy to meet and play with other children. It was while in upper primary and secondary schools that Abby realized that he was missing certain essential things. This realization jolted Abby to the fact that these were obstacles to successful learning. Essential learning resources such as computers and calculators were unavailable in the schools that Abby went to and he had to make do “with pen and paper” (interview 1, p.1). Abby says that calculators, which were vital in science subjects “were not allowed to be used in Kenyan schools because only a few students could afford and so it made things hard for those who wanted to do sciences” (interview 1, p.2). Calculators were allowed in Kenyan schools and during examinations in 2006. As a result of lack of computers in schools, Abby says students “had to rely on text books, which the parents bought and sometimes books were not enough and you had to rely on teachers’ notes” (interview 1, p.2).

According to Abby there was no library in the primary school he attended and instead there was “a centre acting as a library”. There were a number of restrictions put on the use of this centre, especially the borrowing of books. Abby says these restrictions came up as a result of students stealing books. One of these regulatory practices was that students were to read books and leave them
inside the centre. Abby points out that this restriction put “a big limitation” on to students, like him, who wanted to borrow and read books at home. The secondary school that Abby went to had a library, but an inadequate supply of books. Thus, Abby had this to say when asked about library in his previous school.

We did not have a library in primary school, but had a centre acting as library…sometimes students stole books and restrictions that sometimes the centre put, so it was a bit hard to get books you wanted, you know sometimes you needed books and no borrowing books, you just come and sit there, umm, read it, go or maybe jot notes and leave it there, so that was a big limitation. In high school, boarding school, there was a library, few text books…sometimes not enough books and the materials were very limited. (Interview 1, p.2)

Abby has negative memories the way primary teachers in the primary school he went to, handled discipline of students. He asserts that canning of students was a form of punishment that instead of correcting their misbehavior, intimidated them. It created obstacles to learning for students who could not cope with this painful form of punishment. Perhaps, in this circumstances, Abby began “to walk the tight rope” carefully so as not to tip over and fall into the valley. Even though the secondary school that Abby attended had no canning policy, he says there were other harsh forms of punishments which were meted out to indiscipline students. Abby brought up the issue of teachers being unfair in the way they handled indiscipline students whom they hated. This reminds me of many cases involving
students who claimed they were hated by some teachers. This is a very contentious issue which is very hard to resolve and especially in Kenya where teachers are deemed to be correct in any accusation.

Secondary school was a bit different, still there were harsh disciplines and harsh punishment like washing of toilets and things like that, being suspended and sometimes students lie to you (laughs), umm, those were the experiences…no beating of students was very much practised at my time…it was better at secondary school, but still things were very harsh on you if the teachers hated you. (Interview 1, p.1)

According to Abby, teaching was very teacher-centered. Teachers did not give students the opportunity to participate actively in the learning process, instead they dominated the show. “…teachers had to direct you on things to study, the way to answer things” (interview 1, p.1). Abby points out “…teachers normally did not accept questions… (but) only when you wanted to clarify…or to give a different view” (interview 1, p.2).

Abby recounts that there was a lack of proper teaching of English in his primary school and he attributes this to teachers who themselves were taught English by translating into native languages. So a teacher would name an object in the native language and in English, and students would repeat both after the teacher. Abby’s English writing skills were a problem which he thinks was due to the poor
teaching of literature. According to Abby, spoken English skills were not practised by students as they resorted to native language after school.

Primary teachers were sort of using English mixed up with native language…after classes, we could speak a lot in native language other than English…in secondary school, the use of English was good…but the written English was getting complicated sometimes especially English literature which was not being taught well and then setting of hard exams. (Interview 1, p.2)

Abby notes that there were some cultural practices in Kenya that were a must for every member of his society. As a young male, Abby had to participate in some of these cultural practices, and go away to boarding school. Although Abby says that his society cared less for girls’ education, he is quick to state that taking boys away to boarding schools did not solve interference of their studies by cultural practises when they came home for holidays. In effect, these cultural practises interfered with education of both boys and girls.

The most common cultural practises were ceremonies such as circumcision of boys and girls (female circumcision is outlawed but still practised secretly by some communities in Kenya today), naming of young children, marriage celebrations and traditional dances. These are common among traditional and remote communities, compared to those in urbanized and civilized areas. In most cases boys tend to be attracted to these cultural practices more than girls. But due to demands placed on girls and females by most families, their education is
more affected than that of boys (see discussion on girl-child education, p.63). Although each of the interviewed participants expressed varied views on this aspect of cultural influence, I agree with those who said girls’ education was affected by poor self-esteem and being overworked at home. Iris and Kate paint vivid pictures of the way education of girls is undervalued by most Kenyan societies. And Abby asserts that cultural influences had more effects on girls than boys.

There were some cultural festivals and practices that, kind of were a must for members of the community and as a young person I had to go there when they are taking place. But for the boys, it was a bit different from the girls and, umm, for the boys, they are taken to the boarding school far away from these practices and where these cultural influences were minimal, but when you came home you get distracted, you have to go, you have to attend them so you do not study much. (Interview 1, p.1)

Abby depicts the confusion that is there between the less educated and cultured members of the society, and the young members of society who want more of the western education. The younger generation is in need of education and its associated modern ways. The older members are stuck in the old ways and values which seem not to work any more in a modern world. Yet the older generation wants the youth to carry on the old societal traditions. As Abby comments “having the members of the community around who are not well educated (pause) causes confusion” (interview 1, p.1).
Abby suggests availability of the following in order to succeed in his studies at La Trobe University: mentoring scheme; organized advice on using resources and on reduction of university fees, an indication of commodification of education. He also suggests the employment of African lecturers who will act as role models to Kenyan students. Abby’s advice to Kenyan students planning to come to Australia is for them to learn first how to use computers, acquaint themselves with Australian use of English and once in Australia , seek help from their lecturers.

5.2.1 Summary

The case study reveals that Abby received inadequate preparation for overseas studies and had little or no orientation resulting in greater challenges when he arrived at La Trobe University. As a result, a set of four contrasting scenarios can be drawn from Abby’s educational experiences in Kenya and Australia, each of which has echoes of “walking on a tight rope”.

Firstly, Abby realized that there was a connection between inadequate resources in Kenyan schools and obstacles encountered in learning. In the primary school, the center where students went to read books placed restrictions on their use and, in high school, the library had very few books, and they were out of date. Students had to make do with very limited resources. By contrast, at La Trobe University, Abby discovered that there were many resources, but he did not know
how to use them and had to struggle to learn the usage of computer programs and the library. Meanwhile, Abby’s learning progress was apparent.

Secondly, as teaching and learning styles used in Kenyan schools were teacher-centered and disciplinarian, students were not given the chance to participate actively in classroom learning. Moreover, this form of authoritarian teaching style is bound to discourage students from learning. In his studies at La Trobe University, Abby encountered teaching and learning styles that were student-centered and he had to struggle to find information from the library, use a computer and present his work during tutorials. He realized also that he had to be creative and critical in analyzing information (or plagiarize and suffer consequences), and had to prepare his own notes from wide reading.

Thirdly, English language teaching was problematic in Kenya schools and the use of the translation method in primary school may have led students not to take learning serious and to avoid practicing spoken English as they communicated in their native language outside school. Abby could not understand the English accent and slang as used at La Trobe University. This limited his smooth participation in classroom learning and spoken and written presentation of his work. It also became an obstacle to his learning and social interaction with other students.
Finally, there is a perception that traditional Kenyan cultural practices affect girls’ education more than boys. Most boys are placed in boarding schools away from traditional cultural influences whereas girls stay at home or attend local day schools. The society puts a lot of demands on girls which interfere with their studies. Abby found out that there was equality between genders here in Australia. While in Australia Abby realized that too much socializing, at the expense of studies, is detrimental to learning and that this calls for a balanced student life. Abby also perceived that it is a bit confusing for a student to understand many things at La Trobe University without the help from other students. But he is skeptical about local students who seem not ready to assist if you are not one of their own. However, Abby stops short of saying, racism is silently practised by some students at La Trobe University.

5.3 Case Study III: Kate “Jumping into a river and not knowing how to swim”

Kate is a married female student from Kenya, 28 years of age and the first born of three siblings. After completing high school education she enrolled for a Diploma in Nursing, but had no opportunity to work in Kenya. In 2004, Kate enrolled at La Trobe University for a Bachelor of Nursing degree and was completing her third year at the time of this interview. Her ambition is to become a qualified nurse and get a good job.
Overview

Kate describes her educational experiences, metaphorically as “jumping into a river and not knowing how to swim”. The decision to “jump into a river” according to Kate, is a voluntary one and describes her approach to handling new situations, including her educational experiences. This metaphor also depicts the courage that Kate has whenever she is faced with new experiences. Inexperience as in ‘swimming’ does not deter her when it comes to a new venture that she is interested in pursuing. Rather when faced with new and challenging experience, such as the pursuit of education, Kate learns how to swim while ‘inside the water’ and not before. Kate’s experiences in Australia and in Kenya, discussed below, extents this metaphor.

La Trobe University experiences

Kate’s courageous travel to Australia to pursue studies, even after not getting enough information, attests to her metaphor “jumping into a river” without any knowledge about swimming. She risked drowning or other dangers and made a daringly ‘big decision’ to travel abroad for studies. Kate describes her arrival in Australia as “it was the most devastating experience” (interview 1, p.2) because she did not know anybody who would help her settle in. I was in exactly the same situation when I first arrived at La Trobe University. When I approached the international programs office to get details of any other Kenyan student, I was told it was not possible because of ‘privacy policy’. This was devastating news to
me as I seriously needed assistance from someone who was from my cultural background, to help me settle in.

The orientation of new students is supposed to help them adjust to the new environment and settle in quickly. The kind of orientation Kate received did not enable her to adjust quickly.

I would still say at the end of the day there were still some areas I could not find and I had to keep looking and also different use of different resources like the library and knowing different areas in the university which is of course, it is a big university. So you do not expect to learn anything in (orientation) of a day or two.

(Interview 1, pp.2-3)

Another issue is English language proficiency and Kate said “I knew English and had passed well” in high school, but when she came to Australia she found out that English language is spoken differently. It was while at La Trobe University that Kate came to know that there exists a difference worldwide in the way English language is spoken and any new person will find these variations “difficult” to understand. She describes her first day in class as “the worst day in my life”. She said she felt different from the rest of the class members as a result of her different English accent.

Kate also mentions the cultural differences that she encountered at La Trobe University such as seeing that women are respected and that there is equality of
gender. Having come from a society where women suffered many ‘put downs’ and are regarded as being lower than men in all areas, it was almost a ‘shocking’ experience for Kate to see that,

Women (were) respected in the society. I could see it was very evident that there is no discrimination, everyone is taken equally and that is quite different because in Kenya women are termed as low people. I felt more confident in my studies, and being in the health sciences area it was a positive thing … and everyone is respected in the society. (Interview 1, p.3)

Other unfamiliar cultural practices, Kate mentions, was “see(ing) women smoking” and the boy-girl relationship which, Kate said is too open and too casual. Kate said that in Kenya “girls segregate themselves from the boys”, and “girls stick with the girls, otherwise if you are seen with the boys, then you are termed as being very immoral and it has a big impact in the society” (interview 1, p.3).

The issue of food came up in Kate’s interview. Kate thought that the provision of food stuffs in restaurants within the university should cater for different student cultural groups. This would help solve difficulties that overseas Kenyan students face before they get used to different food stuffs available.

Having different restaurants with Kenyan food, so that when someone comes for the first time (will be able to buy food) because most people have difficulties with
different food and lifestyle. I would suggest that we should have different restaurants where we should be able to access our cultural food. (Interview 1, p.5)

The idea of food may sound a trivial matter, but it can have an impact on any new student who is not used to food that is served in the restaurants within and outside the University. A staple food in most Kenyan homes is called “ugali” which is cooked from white maize flour. This maize flour is not commonly found here in Australia. When I was still new to Australia, I missed Kenyan food (ugali) very much. It took me so long to get used to new types of food sold in the restaurants or how to make them.

What makes learning successful for most Kenyan students at La Trobe University? Kate points out that some of the things that have assisted her to succeed in learning at La Trobe University are: learning to use resources such as internet and the library and “a lot of help, especially from lecturers, international programs office and counseling department” (interview 1, p.4). Kate felt that good use of resources, the availability of support programs, and ready help from lecturers, would lead to successful learning of Kenyan students. Kate suggests that provision of “one on one counseling session” (interview 1, p.4) with counselors just a few days after the arrival of overseas Kenyan students would help them adjust with some ease. What advice does Kate give to current and prospective overseas Kenyan students?
Make sure that they prepare thoroughly before coming to Australia, specially with the English language, it is good if they watch different (T.V.) channels where they'll be able to understand the different (accents) and ‘jargons’ in Australian culture…get to know the different lifestyles…take a few computer courses because assignments here, as we all know, have to be submitted, umm, may be electronically or they have to be printed out. (Interview 2, p.6)

Kate’s advice to overseas Kenyan students is to “persevere”, work hard and use available resources well. She also advised them to have a positive attitude towards western culture and “I can do attitude that no matter how different things are, I can still do them” (Interview 2, p.5). Kate asserts that overseas Kenyan students should reach out to students from “other countries” in order to overcome cultural differences that they face.

**Transition Period**

It was not easy for Kate to leave her family for studies abroad, as she says “it was hard to leave home, especially being away from family” (interview 1, p.2). The thought of living in Australia alone was a challenge for Kate because she had never lived away from her parents. Preparation for overseas studies that Kate received was inadequate. She says “(i) talked to a friend who gave me different (information)” and also “I just got a little bit of preparation from recruitment agent” (interview 1, p.2).
The experience that Kate had when she arrived “was devastating because I was still new and I did not know anyone” (interview 1, p.2). Kate settling in was slow as she had not met someone from Kenya to assist her adjustment. Although she got some orientation, Kate feels it was not adequate.

I did get orientation, yeah, (but) I would say that at the end of the day there some areas I could not find and had to keep looking (asking)…it is a big university so you do not expect to learn anything in a day or two. (Interview 1, p.3)

**Kenyan educational experience**

Kate, like Iris or Abby experienced, describes teaching and learning styles in Kenyan schools as teacher-centred. Teachers forced students to understand subject content which is sometimes hard to grasp. Students are expected to memorize the notes handed down to them by teachers. Kate said that in Kenya, students were being spoon fed as “teachers come with notes and sort of just dictate the notes to you” (interview 1, p.4).

As noted above, Kate found that gender inequality was prevalent in Kenyan societies and that discriminatory Kenyan gender practices affected her studies “in a big way”. Kate notes that girls were not given the chance to prove their abilities in the Kenyan education system. She asserts that for girls and women educational improvement and progress were curtailed by a culture that disfavored and demeaned women.
According to most Kenyan cultures, girls are termed as women in the home and are responsible for so many things. In the family you have different types of duties that you have to attend everyday as compared to boys who have the chance to study anytime they want. (Interview 1, p.1)

Whenever families were faced with the choice between educating girls or boys, due to scarcity of resources, they were more likely to choose boys than girls. I have witnessed a majority of Kenyan families choosing boys education, as an investment that will benefit them later on whereas girls’ education is viewed as an investment that will benefit their future husbands. Kate points out that “you can even be told not to attend school so that you can attend to family duties” (interview 1, p.1) whereas the boys are allowed to go to school. This same idea has been expressed by Iris and Abby in their interview data.

Kate has also emphasized that girls, who are lucky enough to attend school, find that they cannot perform well in science subjects. These girls “are sort of a bit reluctant in taking science subjects seriously”. These girls also have less time to spend on the relatively hard science subjects because of the amount of work given to them at home. Kate mentions that it is common in Kenya to hear girls say that “sciences are not for us”, and I think this is what they hear from society in general as well. On the other hand, boys are expected by the society to do “hard” subjects to prove their masculinity. Kate said that “they (boys) put a lot of time” (p.1) into their studies and end up performing well.
In spite of the fact that Kate was privileged to attend a private primary school and a public girl’s secondary school, she had to learn to swim in the new and “different experiences” that she faced, such as new educational subjects that she encountered in her new classes or schools, proved a challenge for her (interview 1, p.1).

Kate points out that, the Kenyan school teachers she had did not teach students well. “The way the teachers teach is different, they force you to understand things even if you don’t, you can’t really understand” (Interview 1, p.1). Kate’s impression is that these teachers did not care about their students’ abilities and interest in their subjects. Kate thinks these “teachers expect too much (work) from the students” and this made students “to work really hard and the teachers just give guidelines” (interview 1, pp.1-2).

According to Kate, English language speaking skills that were taught in Kenyan primary schools could not be put into practice by students. Lack of English proficiency affected students’ understanding of questions during examinations.

(English) language was, especially in primary school, it was mostly used in class and when students were not in class, they would then go and use … mother tongue. …and that is how it came to affect most of our studies especially when you do not understand a question in English and it made it hard for you to excel. But in secondary school, I would say there was a little improvement, because the
teachers were a bit strict and again the environment, umm, changed a little bit. In fact, the teachers really stressed on people practising English. (Interview 1, p.2)

Kate states that teachers in high school improved their students’ teaching of the English language through strict punishment. “It was enforced through punishment” and whenever students spoke in “any other language then they would be punished severely for it” (Interview 1, p.2). Kate is quick to add that the effect of this punishment was “incredible” as it led to improvements in English and examinations.

5.3.1 Summary
As is evident already from Iris’ and Abby’s case studies, the contrast between prior experiences of education in Kenya and the unfamiliar cultural practices of education in Australia sets particular challenges for these Kenyan students. The following summary emphases Kate’s particular version of these shared challenges.

Kate shows that transitional phase, such as preparation for overseas studies and orientation on arrival at La Trobe University, had inadequacies that made it hard for her to tackle challenges a head. An indication of commodification of education without structures for adjustment of ‘clients’. At the end of the day she had to work hard through “swimming”, with very minimal help, to know places and how to use resources. The La Trobe orientation was too brief for her to learn most of the important things especially given that Kate had come from a different country.
Secondly, Kate indicates that Kenyan school teachers force students to learn subject content that is hard for them to learn. She provides evidence that teaching and learning styles in Kenya were teacher-centered as shown by teachers preparing notes and expecting students to memorize them. Consequently, at La Trobe University, Kate found it a challenge to search for information from books and internet.

Thirdly, English language use, accent, colloquialism and slang at La Trobe University, are different to what Kate had been exposed to in Kenya. Kate has revealed that in Kenyan schools, English was not well taught, and that students did not practice English language skills learned. The use of punishment to enforce the teaching of English language, Kate thinks, may have discouraged students from trying to learn it. English language is spoken in a different accent in Australia which increased Kate’s learning difficulties at La Trobe University.

Finally, Kate’s experience of Kenyan cultural practices draws attention to how girls were discriminated against in the education sector. She says that Kenyan culture did not encourage girls’ educational progress whereas boys’ education was valued. Kenyan families viewed boys’ education as an investment and this led to boys being encouraged to take up science subjects seriously. Kate points out that a majority of girls gave up on science subjects because they did not get adequate time to study hard. She realized that in Australia there was gender
equality and that women were valued and respected and this made her develop confidence in science based course. She realized that in Australia, it was common to see women smoking, open boy-girl relationships and unavailability of African food in restaurants.

5.4 Case Study IV: Gideon “Being bought a new car and not knowing how to drive”

Gideon, 30 years old, is a single male student who hails from Kenya. He undertook his primary and secondary education in Kenya and had no work experience in Kenya. He enrolled in Bachelor of Business Studies at La Trobe University, Australian (mid year 2006) and was completing the first semester of his studies at the time of this interview.

Overview

Gideon describes his educational experience as like “being bought a new car without having the knowledge on how to drive”. This image illustrates Gideon’s decision to come to Australia to study as like starting something new and having very little knowledge about what he would encounter (as inexperienced driver). It is most probable that his choice may not have been taken into consideration when the car was being bought. Asked whether he received any preparation about studies abroad, Gideon replied “I knew nothing about the challenges I would face in Australia” (interview 1, p.3). He had to struggle to learn how to do things by himself; even if it meant making mistakes such as driving “in a zigzag”
(Interview 2, p.6). During his studies at La Trobe University, Gideon states that the system of learning was student-centered, “students find their own ideas by reading; here you have to read to pass” (interview 1, p.4). He had to struggle to adjust to this new system. Secondly, Gideon faced a different culture in Australia such as differences in food, religious issues, manner of greeting, gender equality, and time. Thirdly, spoken English was different and he had to find ways of achieving success in learning.

Summarizing his educational experiences in Kenya, Gideon says that teachers were a source of knowledge as well as enforcers of discipline, learning resources were inadequate, and learning of English, although a compulsory subject was poorly taught. Surprisingly, Gideon claims that traditional cultural practices favored girls’ education at the expense of boys contrary to the other three participants (Kate, Iris and Abby).

La Trobe University

Gideon describes the teaching and learning styles at La Trobe University as "student-centered and lecturers were facilitators" (interview 1, p.3). Given the differences in approach, from Kenya, Gideon says he had to struggle to adjust by “working hard” and learning to support his ideas, however wrong or right they may be.

It is mostly student-centered; students find their own ideas by reading. Here you have to read to pass. Teaching aids are used...like computers, projectors and
videos. Exams are done on essays and must be typed...again here the due dates for handing in exams or essays or research work is more stressed by lecturers and students present (their work) in tutorials and in class. (Interview 1, p.4)

Gideon states that the time for handing in assignments is strictly adhered to and late handing in leads to a deduction of “a few marks from your work” (interview 1, p.4). In my own experience I learned to start working on my assignments early enough so as to give me adequate time to get clarification in case of any difficulties. I also realized that being a hardworking and well organized student leads to academic excellence.

Learning resources at La Trobe University, according to Gideon, are modern, for example the libraries have “all books, old and new” (interview 1, p.4). And these resources were a great help for Gideon when doing research work. He also said that there were computers, which he did not know how to use and states that “I knew nothing about computers, so I faced a lot of problems and I was assisted by my friends” (interview 1, p.4).

Asked about his view of Australian culture, Gideon points out that some Australian cultural practices were different from his.

I did not find African food in the restaurants. My religious background was also affecting me, because in Australia you can’t identify who is a Christian and who is
Another challenging cultural issue, Gideon found, was adjusting to time schedules. He says “I had a problem in adjusting to time” (interview 1, p.4). Over time Gideon learned that “being time conscious and planning well” (interview 2, p.5) in advance contributed to success in his studies. From my personal experience, time schedules were not strictly followed by a majority of people in Kenya. This reminds me of a common saying or phrase “there is no hurry in Africa” which is quoted every time a person comes late to an appointment. This bad perception about time schedules has become a habit for me and even now I still struggle to keep appointments with people. Appointments have confused me for a long time, especially about what it means to meet someone at seven or eight. This is because I was used to waiting for a whole hour for a person to appear at a set time for an appointment. However, here, in Australia, an appointment set for a certain time means exactly that time stated. The failure on my part to stick to time schedules has meant lose of opportunities and disappointments to others.

English language proficiency emerges as very important for Gideon to successfully study in La Trobe University. This is true especially when teaching, communication and examinations require effective command of the language. Gideon states that he and most other Kenyan overseas students “struggle a lot
with English which he believes affects their academic performance (interview 1, p.4). It has been “harder” for him to give “oral presentation” and he has “a lot of fear” of tutorials, because he is aware of his lack of English language proficiency. The same difficulty was expressed by Iris who described her first tutorial class as “intimidating” and Abby who described a lack of English proficiency as an obstacle to his learning. Differences in English accents and idioms appear to prevent smooth communication and dialogue with other students and lecturers.

Gideon has succeeded in the first semester and attributes this to “hard work and dedication, seeking help from lecturers, use of the library and computers, handing in work in time and wide reading” (interview 2, p.5). Gideon also suggests that in order for overseas Kenyan students to succeed in learning, the university needs to offer computer classes for overseas students and lecturers to acquaint themselves with Kenyan English accent and teaching styles. He also suggests culturally diverse lecturers and, if possible reduction of “the university fees” for international students (interview 2, p.6).

**Transition Period**

Asked about the reasons for deciding to come to Australia, Gideon says “(Australian universities) certificates and degrees are highly recognized in my country…and when you go back to Kenya you are (more) highly paid than the local” (interview 1, p.3). He also says “it was easier coming to Australia than other countries like United States and Britain” (interview 1, p.3). About studying abroad,
Gideon felt “a bit happy… (because) in Kenya it was prestigious to go abroad”, despite the fact that he “knew nothing about the challenges” that he would face in Australia. This is reminiscent of being given a car without any clues of how to drive it.

Gideon also points out that he did not receive any preparation before leaving Kenya. He was happy that he was traveling abroad, something he had never experienced before. However, the excitement about going abroad was cut short by Gideon’s thoughts that he was leaving his family, friends and a familiar environment (interview 1, p.3).

**Kenya: Experiences prior to coming to Australia**

Gideon regarded teachers in Kenya as the source of knowledge, whether in the co-education, government primary school or the single sex, boarding high school that Gideon attended.

My experiences in primary school…the teachers were the source of knowledge. Students used to write and reproduce during exams. There were no questions to teachers…you did not give opinions, otherwise this was termed as indiscipline and learning resources…there were no libraries, computers and no laboratories. In high school…the teachers used to give students the ideas of what to do… I mean the teachers were the source of knowledge. Students used to write and reproduce during exams. (Interview 1, p.1)
Gideon describes the teachers as “more authoritative and students were supposed to respect the teachers when in class and outside the class (interview 1, p.1). To enforce discipline and observance of the time schedule, Gideon says “students were not supposed to enter class when the teacher was in class” (interview 1, p.1). Gideon states that whenever a student was late, he or she was not allowed to enter class. I remember during my time in primary school that, coming to class late was a serious offence and one was made to kneel on concrete floors until the end of lesson. Gideon describes the way discipline was enforced in schools, “you are not supposed to talk when the teacher is in class, have a discussion, chew anything or eat from class” (interview 1, p.1). He points out that “there was a lot of courtesy and teachers were highly respected” (interview 1, p.1).

On the other hand, indiscipline was dealt with through the formation of a parent-teacher association that “dealt with discipline” cases as well as “academic reports and (school) attendance” (interview 1, p.2). According to Gideon, when it came to solving misbehavior issues affecting students, parents tended to side with teachers against students. This was also a common practice when I was in primary school. Students would be subjected to harsh punishments which they did not deserve and presumed guilty even before being given the opportunity to defend themselves. Statements such as “teachers are always right” would be uttered by parents to intimidate their children. In order to avoid being punished, Gideon says “we used to cram (notes) for you to pass the exams” (interview 1,
Gideon says “students who failed examinations had to repeat the whole year and not just a semester” (interview 1, p.3). Moreover, national examinations results were advertised in the media without considering the effect this would have on those who had failed examinations.

There was one major examination in primary school and one major exam in high school that was national. This was ranked according to top students in province and district. This was advertised in the media, that is, the results were released publicly. It could be advertised in media like T.V and Radio. There was no privacy and these contributed to and affected most of the students (who did not do well). (Interview 1, p.3)

Lack of teaching resources, as stated by Gideon, resulted in teachers providing prepared notes to students. Gideon declares that “in primary school there was no library and in high school, we used to have a library but not fully equipped” (interview 1, p.3). Books that were in the high school library were “old and were rarely read” (interview 1, p.3). He adds that there were certain set books which were recommended by teachers for the preparation of examinations. The same issue was raised by Abby who stated that parents had to buy these recommended set books. Iris also said most parents could not afford to buy these books although they were meant to assist students to do well in examinations.
Gideon sums up experience of being taught English as “a bit of English and the local language…tribal language” (interview 1, p.2). I understand this to be another reference to the translation method of language teaching. This was only supposed to be done in the lower primary school. But in this case, it went on up to upper primary school, an indication of how poorly English language was taught. In high school, Gideon says “English was compulsory” but students ignored practising it and this resulted in their failure of examinations. Gideon shows that the teaching of English was enforced through “a lot of punishments” (interview 1, p.2), an association also made by Iris, Kate and Abby. This also happened during my primary education and in this case the teaching of English was enforced by use of a card called “disk” which was passed down from the first person to break the rule of not speaking in the English language, to the last person. During the evening assemblies, all those students who had been handed the disk would remain behind for punishment. They were all given various punishments ranging from washing classroom floors, cutting tall grasses in the compound, to weeding schools’ flower gardens. The more students were punished, the more they continued to break this rule.

According to Gideon, most Kenyan societies had different roles for girls and for boys. He said that roles given to boys, such as helping their parents in the farms, did not allow them to do school home work. On the other hand girls were given work to do at home and this gave them opportunity to read.
There were roles for girls and boys…the boys were to help their parents in farms looking after the animals and little time was left for their studies. For girls, they used to help their mothers in cooking and collecting firewood. Boys were more disadvantaged because they never used to stay most of the time at home. Girls used to stay most of the time at home and they did a bit of reading after their washing and stuff. (Interview 1, p.2)

The above observation is contrary to those raised by Abby, Kate, and Iris. The three participants supported the idea that girls’ work at home do not favor their studies and that boys have all the time to study. Gideon’s view on this matter may be a reflection on rural or more isolated cases, and not a common practice among the majority of Kenyan families.

5.4.1 Summary

Several significant themes emerge from the above description and analysis of Gideon’s educational experiences. Firstly, in the teacher-centered system of education Gideon experienced, teachers were the sources of knowledge and enforcers of learning through punishment. They dictated notes to students who were supposed to memorize and reproduce the same content during examinations. Student opinions were not invited by teachers so that students became passive listeners as the teacher controlled most of the classroom activities. When Gideon arrived at La Trobe University, he realized that the system was different and he had to struggle to adjust to it. The student-centered approach at university required the students, like Gideon, to find their own ideas
through reading widely, to present their work during tutorials and to show active participation in classroom learning in order to attain certain marks. Lecturers acted in the role of facilitators who encouraged learning.

Secondly, as Gideon emphasizes from his experience in Kenya, schools had inadequate resources, computers were non existent, the primary school library was non existent and the secondary school library had insufficient books. Set books which were recommended for examination preparation were expensive for most students. On the other hand learning resources at La Trobe University were abundant but Gideon lacked the skills on how to use them. He had to struggle to learn how to use them in order to be effective in his studies.

Gideon draws attention to the ways that Kenyan teachers' performance and competence in their teaching of students were assessed by the national examination results. Thus, teaching and learning was examination driven.

Fourthly, in addition to the above, was the use of punishments for student failure to do well in the internal examinations. Students resorted to cramming and memorization of notes in order to pass these examinations whereas teachers spent most of their teaching time revising past examination papers. The rationale for these bad practices was to allow more students to pass examinations and to avoid repeating grades. Such training would be a serious blow to Gideon at La Trobe University because at La Trobe University, Gideon was supposed to read
widely and critically, and later type his work using the computer. He had to
defend his answers and participation in class discussion would earn him marks.
He faced the challenge in developing a critical and analytical way of learning and
cultivating independent learning.

Fifthly, Gideon was used to a culture that stifled students' voices and concerns,
whereby parents and teachers were feared instead of being respected. Parent-
teacher association, Gideon mentions, had a lot of say over the administration of
punishments and acted unfairly towards students. Gideon faced different cultural
practices at La Trobe University compared with what he was used to in Kenya
and could not find restaurants that served African food. On the other hand he was
pleased to connect easily with people who shared his Christian faith. In Kenya,
time schedules are not followed strictly and that it does not matter if people fail to
honor appointments. It is common for people not to stick to set schedules in
Kenya. Gideon realized that it is different at La Trobe because he had to hand in
assignments on time or lose marks. He faced problems as he tried to adjust to
time schedules.

Finally, being taught English through the translation method with little or no
application of English language skills learned in class, did not prepare Gideon
well for university overseas. When Gideon came to La Trobe, he had to type his
essays in English, and communicate fluently in English during presentations. He
also had to grapple with differences in spoken English. Gideon says all of this
affected his academic performance, interaction and presentations during tutorials.

5.5 Metaphorical Summations

In this section I discuss the key metaphorical images that each participant used to describe their experiences in response to questions asked. When asked how she would describe her educational experience using an image, Iris says it is like being “a wingless bird”. This “winglessness” can be attributed to Iris’ educational experiences whereby she had to depend on others for success. This is evident in the experiences she faced at La Trobe such as: inadequate preparation for overseas studies and orientation, different teaching and learning styles, and her unfamiliarity with resources and English. She also felt “wingless” as a result of these unfamiliar experiences at university. However, when Iris got used to these experiences, it was like growing wings and being able to fly. Gradually, Iris could harness privileged background and educational experiences in Kenya to empower her. She felt like a winged bird and able to fly after coming to Australia and by her third year was doing very well as a result of a liberating environment, sheer hard work and help from friends, and lecturers.

Abby describes his educational experiences as “walking on a tight rope across a valley”. In order to be successful, he had to be focused and “balanced”. He searched the internet for information before coming to Australia. He also showed a lot of determination to adjust to changes at La Trobe University in spite of an
orientation that he says was too short. Again Abby’s Kenyan educational experience was evidence of failure to prepare learners for overseas experiences, but he was “focused” on what he wanted to do, a science course abroad. While at La Trobe, he sought help from other students, lecturers and made good use of available resources, which enabled him to succeed “walking the tight rope across the deep valley”.

Kate sums up her educational experiences as “jumping into a river and not knowing how to swim”. This is evident by her travel abroad for studies with very minimal information about what to expect. Kate had little preparation for overseas studies and felt that her orientation was inadequate and yet she managed to adjust. Her experience of studies at La Trobe University was quite challenging and “intimidating” as she could not understand, as well as be understood. The support that Kate received from student welfare programs, lecturers and friends helped her to swim through challenging waters. On the other hand, her Kenyan educational experience revealed teaching as teacher-directed with emphasis on memorization, gender inequality and poorly taught English. She had to “swim” fast and diligently to overcome these challenges and achieve her dreams of studying overseas. Apparently, she was doing well in her third year of studies and looking forward to getting a good job, which could be equated to being an experienced “swimmer”.

Gideon describes his educational journey as "being bought a new car and not knowing how to drive". Gideon perceives educational ventures as a gift, which he has to learn to use or otherwise it will be rendered useless. Although preparation for studies abroad was inadequate for Gideon, it was “prestigious” to go abroad, just like learning to drive a new car. He had to learn new experiences the way he would learn about the parts of a car. Gideon indicates that his Kenyan educational experience was that teachers were sources of knowledge and authoritative, the parent-teacher association meted out harsh punishments, resources were inadequate and English was poorly taught. Again, Gideon had to take these as background challenges of a new driver who is learning how to drive a car. He had to be persistent and careful in order to succeed and attributes his success in first semester to hard work and help from lecturers, like being helped to be an excellent ‘driver’.

The four participants have shown that they share similarities and differences in the way they perceived their journey of education in Australia and Kenya. However, their experiences hinge on struggling to adapt to changes and challenges at the initial stages of their studies. By the time of these interviews three of the participants (Kate, Abby, and Iris) seemed to be succeeding in their studies despite their struggles at the start of their courses. Gideon, who had just finished first semester, was still struggling to adjust.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions and implications that may be drawn from the analysis of the data. The objective of this research has been to provide space and time to hear from overseas Kenyan students studying at La Trobe University. Four students were invited to articulate their experiences and concerns through two semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Chapter five has presented the individual case studies based on these students’ accounts of their experiences in Kenyan and Australian studies. Through the research process of documenting, analyzing and interpreting the interview data, some significant common themes have emerged and these provide the focus of the next section.

6.1 Themes and Conclusions

Across the case studies, four themes emerge as especially significant. First, all four students felt ill-prepared, by their prior educational experiences in Kenya, for commencing overseas studies in an English speaking university and country. This theme is evident in many ways, in particular in the dominance of a teacher-directed approach to teaching and learning, the consequent passive acceptance by students, and their reproduction of teachers’ dictated notes during examinations.
Allied to this, a chronic shortage of resources had curtailed the quality of learning opportunities for students in Kenya. Although the students recall how their primary schools were harder hit by shortages of well qualified teachers and educational resources, the whole school system suffered. Even if teachers were in possession of the recommended textbooks or even if there were such school centres, as ‘a library’, books were unavailable or not useful to students. None of the schools attended by the four case study students had computers, and students had no chance of accessing the internet.

According to three of my interviewees, Kenyan girls were disadvantaged in education compared to boys, because girls were given a lot of work to do at home at the expense of their studies. Gideon’s views contradicted this conclusion, with a counter claim that boys were more disadvantaged than girls, because of demands made in rural farming areas. This situation varied from family to family and community to community. In Kenya, culturally boys were expected to achieve better academically than girls (Maathai 2006, p.139). This societal inequality had a far reaching negative impact on girls’ performance in school, and in society in general.

In Kenyan primary schools, the teaching of English language concentrated more on writing than on speaking or reading. This selective way of teaching English, influenced by teachers’ reliance on the translation method and their reluctance in speaking English, was passed on to, and perpetuated by those they taught
(Gaciabu 1997, p.160). No hint was mentioned of an alternative approach to teaching and learning English. Students seldom practise reading in English because of the shortage of books, and then spoke English even less, because of minimal encouragement and the absence of authentic reasons for doing so.

Indeed, in general there was no lack of Kenyan parents and children valuing opportunities for young Kenyans to study at overseas universities. Rather, evidence of high expectation in standards and resources in Australian universities, better employment prospects of overseas graduates returning to Kenya, was always romanticized as a panacea for problems facing society (Maathai 2006). This is a challenge for education providers, policy makers to harness such valuing into resourcing pre-departure preparation. There was also the belief that foreign institutions were better equipped (Waweru 2001, p.1), and offered better education. This confidence in overseas institutions may encourage Kenyans to overlook the setbacks resulting from the fact that pre-departure preparation for the challenges they would face abroad was initially non-existent.

A second common theme emerging from the four student accounts of their experiences during the transition phase also exposes problems, this time associated with the bridging or “border-crossing” between short-term preparation (if any), to their initial orientation in the new university and country. Each case study participant indicated that their preparation for overseas studies was either not well organized or non-existent, and that their orientation on arrival in Australia
was too short. As a result, these Kenyan students felt placed at a disadvantage, as they tried to cope with problems of settling in and concentrating on their studies, and were more prone to culture shock. There is clearly, greater scope for both pre-departure and university orientation programs to ensure that students studying abroad are better prepared for effective entry into the new host culture. In particular, for Kenyan students beginning studies at Australian universities, preparations did not address issues such as cultural differences in terms of equality, casual greetings, strict schedules, and boy-girl relationships, and modern, seemingly complicated transport system and different food.

A third theme is associated with socio-cultural norms and expectations of teaching and learning that contributed to the initial sense of dislocation or disorientation each of the students experienced. Social norms and expectations are not explicitly taught, but learned by trial and error and osmosis. The study revealed that overseas Kenyan students having felt lost or overwhelmed at the beginning, gradually found student-centered methods of teaching encountered at La Trobe University useful challenges that enhanced their studies. Lecturers and tutors expected all students to type their work, participate in class presentations and observe the set time schedules in handing in their assignments. Few of Kenyan students had been exposed to these demands before coming to La Trobe University and found themselves on very fast learning curves.
Overseas Kenyan students found resources at La Trobe University adequate and very useful; however, they failed to gain access or use them efficiently due to being unaware of the specific forms of support or training offered. The resources were completely new to the four Kenyan students, and consequently, the delays in uptake held back their academic performance until they could master them.

Being in an English speaking country, for the first time made a huge difference, with all the variations (of expressions, idioms, accents, vocabulary and socio-linguistic practices – spoken and written, formal and informal) that it brings. These English variations made it hard for overseas Kenyan students to understand and participate in essay presentations, tutorials and interactions with Australians in and outside University. Participants in this study claimed that they could not understand what lecturers were saying when teaching classes and that this situation changed only gradually.

Although there was increased interest for parents and children to gain international education, universities, such as La Trobe University, failed to put in place important services and structures. Participants show that they were struggling to get preparation for overseas studies, and to adjust to studies and life at La Trobe University, despite the fact that they had paid substantial fees for their studies. This also indicates the effects of commodification of education as explained earlier, whereby universities become interested in selling the
commodity called education, to clients called students, without ensuring that these clients are comfortable and satisfied.

A fourth theme, concerning gender relations emerged as a significant factor. Girls felt more disadvantaged than boys in terms of access to education. Typically, in homes in Kenya, boys are given priority of schooling as girls are loaded with family chores. Furthermore in schools girls are discouraged from taking “the hard subject(s)” such as sciences, which are termed as “for boys” or men.

The next section draws together the implications of these themes from this study for the development of overseas education.

6.2 Further Implications of the study

While case study research based on interviews with this group of overseas Kenyan students was not intended to represent generalisable implications for overseas Kenyan students studying in Australian universities, it certainly provides an important selection of individual perceptions and experiences which could be further explored or debated.

In the course of this study, issues regarding teaching and learning styles in Kenyan schools emerged. These issues include teachers’ assumptions that students did not know anything before attending lessons (empty slate) and that knowledge emanated only from teachers and books. Students’ contributions in
classroom discussions were not encouraged but cramming and memorization were seen as the key to success. What difference might it have made or make if teachers in Kenyan schools give their students opportunities to make their own meanings from what they read, or to ask questions, discuss and challenge what they are being taught and what they read? Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007, pp.112) raise such questions in researching ways that Kenyan teachers have been influenced by strong cultural and social assumptions about the purpose of school. Teachers of the English language should be provided with refresher courses on how to teach English to second language learners well how to emphasize all four communication modes of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

It is therefore essential for lecturers at La Trobe University, when dealing with students from such backgrounds, to adjust their teaching to accommodate these students and their past learning experiences. Lecturers and tutors should use the orientation period for overseas students to introduce explicitly the new ways of teaching that they will employ in classroom teaching discussions including peer discussion and presentations.

Further, it is suggested that learning programs at La Trobe University be tailor made to suit the environments and conditions that overseas Kenyan students will eventually face when they graduate and go home. This will help to ease situations where overseas Kenyan graduates, who seem to be highly sought after
by Kenyan employers, cannot effectively apply the knowledge acquired in foreign universities.

Preparation, orientation and adjustment to studies at La Trobe University show that participants were struggling in these areas. This is in spite of the fact that the university was supposed to have internationalized its programs to suit international students’ needs and requirements. Internationalization of education, without putting structures that cater for success of students, disadvantages international students (Arthur 2004, p.6).

The issue of participants struggling with English and academic studies may be an indication of the lowering of academic requirements as a result of commodification of education. Due to the huge amounts of money required to achieve an overseas degree qualifications, it is most probable that those who make it to overseas studies are the sons and daughters of the wealthy. The fact that there are some glaring differences in characteristics of Kenya and Australia, brings forth the issue of relevance of the degree courses that Kenyan students achieve when they go back home.

The role of counseling was raised a number of times, aimed at healing the negative effects that Kenyan traditional cultural practices and variance between two cultures may have had on these students. Counseling can assist overseas Kenyan students, especially female students, to adjust easily in La Trobe, to take
their studies seriously, respond well in a competitive environment in university studies, and later become role models to young Kenyans. In particular, lecturers and tutors can alleviate the difficulties that female Kenyan students may be facing due to prior Kenyan internecine cultural practices, or unfamiliar experiences abroad. A suggestion would be to expose overseas Kenyan female students to studies on feminism which will help to change their perception of “hard subjects” and the place of education in their lives.

The realization of these suggestions will depend upon curriculum changes and implementations in the Kenyan education system and more importantly on policy makers, service providers and lecturers at La Trobe University. It is hoped that this study will increase their understanding of overseas Kenyan students, their backgrounds, experiences, academic and related challenges in their pursuit of knowledge and a better life.
References


Appendix 1

The provinces of Kenya

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Appendix 2.

The Process of Adjustment

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Source: Information and Advice Centre, Nairobi, Kenya
Appendix 3.

Tables Showing Primary School Enrolment Rates.

Table Ia

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<th>Gross Primary School Enrolment Rates 1970-1989 (%)</th>
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Table Ib

<table>
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<th>Gross Primary School Enrolment Rates 1990-1999 (%)</th>
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Appendix 4.

Table 2.
Primary School - Selected Statistics

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Appendix 5.

Student Enrolment at La Trobe University:

Source: La Trobe University Management Information Unit.

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Source: Australian Education International.
This material has been removed due to copyright.
Appendix 8:

Kapkenduiywa Primary School, Eldoret - Kenya

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Source: The Age Newspapers, 3rd March, 2007
Appendix 9

Interview Schedules (Using Semi-structured question)

Interview One

How do you describe the type of schools that you went to in Kenya?
How would you describe your experiences of studying in a Kenyan school?
To what extent do you think the following factors might or might not have affected your studies in Kenyan schools?
   (I) Kenyan cultural practices
   (ii) teaching and learning styles
   (iii) English language use
   (iv) learning resources.

What were the reasons that made you come to study in Australia?
What preparations about studies abroad did you receive before coming to Australia?
How would you describe your feelings when you left Kenya for studies abroad?
What were your feelings when you arrived at La Trobe University?
How would you describe your orientation at La Trobe University?
How do you describe your studies experience at La Trobe University?
To what extent do you think the following factors influenced your studies at La Trobe University?

   (i) Australian cultural practices
   (ii) Australian teaching and learning practices
   (iii) learning resources
   (iv) English language use
Interview Two

What were your hopes and aspirations in coming to study at La Trobe University?

What do you think accounts for your successful learning at La Trobe University?

What support do you think La Trobe University needs to put in place in order for your study to be successful?

What do you think the University needs to change in order for you to achieve your goals?

How do you identify the periods of transition in your post-school situation?

What kind of image or metaphor might best suggest your study experiences?

What advice would you give to other Kenyan students planning to study at La Trobe University, in terms of

(i) preparations for studies abroad

(ii) arrival and settling down in Australia

(iii) studying at La Trobe University.