

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF
PUPILS IN GRADE SEVEN (7) FINAL EXAMINATIONS IN SELECTED PRIMARY
SCHOOLS OF MUNGWI DISTRICT**

BY

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University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
master of Education in Educational Management**

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DECLARATION

I, MUKANU STEPHEN, do hereby declare that this dissertation is a product of my own effort, and that it has never been done before. The sources of all materials referred to in this report have been acknowledged. Any misrepresentation of information that would arise from this report is purely my responsibility.

Signed:

Date:

APPROVAL

This dissertation of MUKANU STEPHEN is approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Education Management, of the University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University.

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DEDICATIONS

To my parents Mr. Kapalangoma M. Peter and Hilaria Malawa who laid the foundation for my education. To Emeldah my wife and our children Mulenga, Malawa, Chibamba, Chileshe and Saviour, education has no age limit, you will do much better than this. To God be the Glory.

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My dear wife Emeldah occupies a very special place in this project as she was always on my side to support me whenever I felt like giving up. All our children, Mulenga, Malawa, Chibamba, Chileshe and Saviour for understanding the importance of this journey undertaken at their expense. Thank you and may God richly bless you all.

ACRONYMS

DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
ECZ	Examination Council of Zambia
MoE	Ministry of Education
PEO	Provincial Education Officer

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine the factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of learners in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District of Northern Province. The study sought to fulfill the following objectives: To assess how the school based factors have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in selected primary school of Mungwi District, to determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations in selected primary schools of Mungwi District and to establish strategies on how pupil performance in grade seven final examinations can be improved in selected primary schools of Mungwi District. A qualitative methodology was used to gather data for this research. Data was gathered using structured interviews and focus group interviews/discussion. This research study was guided by the constructivism theory. Research participants included: The head teachers, grade seven teachers and grade seven pupils.

The findings of the study were as follows: It was clear that the Primary schools in Mungwi were not provided with physical teaching and learning aids. The study also revealed that the government of the republic of Zambia was not adequately funding the primary schools in Mungwi District. The class size was found to influence the teaching and learning process. It was also established that there was no proper supervision of teachers by both internal and external monitors. The study also revealed that the rate of absenteeism was high in selected primary schools of Mungwi District. Furthermore, it was evidenced that most of the parents or guardians had low educational attainments. These parents were not helping and encouraging their children to learn. The study concluded that learners from poor families were more likely to have poor academic performance at school. This study also revealed that most of the learners were covering long distances to and from school. It also clearly established that a good number of pupils had bad attitude towards learning.

Arising from the findings and discussions that addressed all the objectives, this study made the following recommendations: The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education should be providing schools with adequate funding for teaching and learning facilities, the school community partnership should be encouraged to support the development of schools to improve the facilities and ensure that the schools have enough instructional materials

for effective teaching and learning, the school administrators should make sure that Classes are made manageable by adding more streams in schools where the classes are large or overcrowded, Internal and external monitoring must be carried out periodically so that the standards of education are regularly assessed and controlled and lastly, the Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education should construct a primary school within the radius of four kilometers (4km) so that absenteeism as the result of covering long distances to school can be reduced.

Key terms

academic, performance, primary, school, examination, attainment, leaning.

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CHAPTER ONE (1)

INTRODUCTION

1.0. Overview

This introductory chapter gives the background to the study. The chapter also presents the problem of the study investigated, the objectives it will attempt to achieve and the research questions it plans to answer. The theory informing the study and a conceptual framework showing the relationship between variables involved in the study are also part of this introductory chapter. A brief statement of the expected usefulness of the study, the limitations of study will also be looked at, the definitions of operational terms will be done and finally, the summary will conclude the first chapter

1.1. Background of the study

Wise people say that education is the key to success others say that education is the key to national development. That is why the Republic of Zambia has made primary education free to every child so that primary education can be accessed by all the school going children in Zambia. Education is a right for each individual. It is also a means for enhancing the well being and quality of life for the entire society (ECZ, 2013). That is why it is the responsibility of the Republic of Zambia to see to it that education arises from its overall concern to protect the rights of individuals, promote social well-being and achieve a good quality of life for every person through all-embracing economic development (MOE, 1996:11). That is why most parents in Zambia believe that education will make their children have an improved life as well as raise the standards of the family.

A good number of nations recognize the importance of having citizens who are able to read and write. They accept that poor primary education negatively affect national development. The fundamentals of information are acquired at the primary level of education. The primary level is the foundation for additional preparations and trainings. The performance of pupils at this stage will normally determine their future performance in that particular field of work or subject. The vital role that primary education plays in the pupils' life calls for continuous assessment and exploration to determine that access, quality and relevance are acquired (Macharia, 1992). Poor

primary education may lead to low competent graduates, who can become irresponsible citizens due to the fact that their right to quality primary education has been denied.

By considering the cardinal role of primary education, Zambia like most African countries has placed great significance on the increasing of access and quality of this type of education (MOE, 1996:22). Moreover, the need for quality and significant type of education has demanded changes in the curriculum from time to time. The current structure of education in Zambia comprises of four (4) years of Early Education, seven (7) years of Primary Education, five (5) years of Secondary Education and at least three (3) years of Tertiary Education (MOE,2013:27). This type of education was endorsed by the ruling Patriotic Front party (PF) and is well stipulated in the curriculum framework. In 2016 the first group of Grade Seven Pupils sat for their Grade Seven Composite Examinations under a revised curriculum. The Grade Seven (7) Composite Examination is an examination which is administered to candidates countrywide in order for them to proceed to Grade eight (8). The candidates are only guaranteed admission to the secondary School of their choice if they meet the cut-off point in these Examinations (MOE, 1996).This swift growth of education accessibility and the introduction of the revised curriculum has posed numerous problems in terms of lack of trained teachers, lack of skilled and experienced educational administrators, shortage of teaching/learning facilities and over enrolment of pupils (Matomombo, 2003:43). A close investigation of these determinants show that the administration of a school, teaching and learning facilities, school related factors such as teacher qualifications, motivation and absenteeism, pupils' traits to a large extent affects pupils' performance (Manda, 2013:17).

Mungwi district was created as a new district in 1987, it is located between Kasama and Isoka district, 27km from Kasama and 165km from Isoka.The district lies along the famous Chambeshi River where numerous activities are conducted along the banks and plains of the river such as rice farming, fishing and trading. As such, most of the youths prefer to go into fishing, rice growing or trading to walking long distances to access learning facilities. According to the Provincial Statistical Result Analysis (2015), Learner performance at Grade Seven (7) Final Examination in Mungwi had been low for the past years. So it is real that Mungwi District has been experiencing Low academic performance of pupils at grade seven in government primary schools for the past years. This problem of low performance at Grade Seven Pupils can be seen

by looking at grade seven results (7) obtained in the past years. It is against the background provided, that the researcher is suggesting to investigate the causes of low performance of Pupils in Grade Seven (7) Final Examinations in Mungwi district of Northern Province of Zambia.

1.2. Statement of a problem

For many years now Mungwi District of Northern province of Zambia has been recording poor academic results in Grade Seven (7) Final Examination as compared to other Districts of the same Province. For instance, in 2015 the district had an average pass percentage of forty eight (48%) and it was the lowest pass percentage in the Northern Province. In 2016, it had an average percentage of fifty two (52%) and it was at eighth (8th) position in Northern Province (Provincial statistics, 2016). Although the district had a progression rate of four percent (4%), the District needs much to be desired in terms of academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven Final Examinations (Provincial statistics, 2016). Hence, this research will be carried out to investigate specifically the School based factors and the pupil related factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven (7) Final Examinations and suggest the necessary interventions to this problem in Mungwi District of Northern Province.

1.3. General research objective

The study was guided by the following General research Objective:

To investigate the causes of the poor academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven (7) Final examinations in selected Primary Schools of Mungwi District.

1.4. Specific research objectives

This study was guided by the following specific research objectives:

(1) To assess how the school based factors have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations of Mungwi District.

(2) To determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations of Mungwi District.

(3) To establish strategies on how pupil performance in grade seven final examinations can be improved in Mungwi District.

1.5. General Research Question

The research was guided by the following General Research Question:

1. What are the causes of the poor academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven (7) Final examinations in selected Primary Schools of Mungwi District?

1.6. Specific Research Questions

This research sought to answer the following questions:

- (1) What school based factors cause poor academic performance in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District?
- (2) What pupil related factors cause poor academic performance in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District?
- (3) What are the strategies for improving pupils' academic performance in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District?

1.7. Theoretical framework

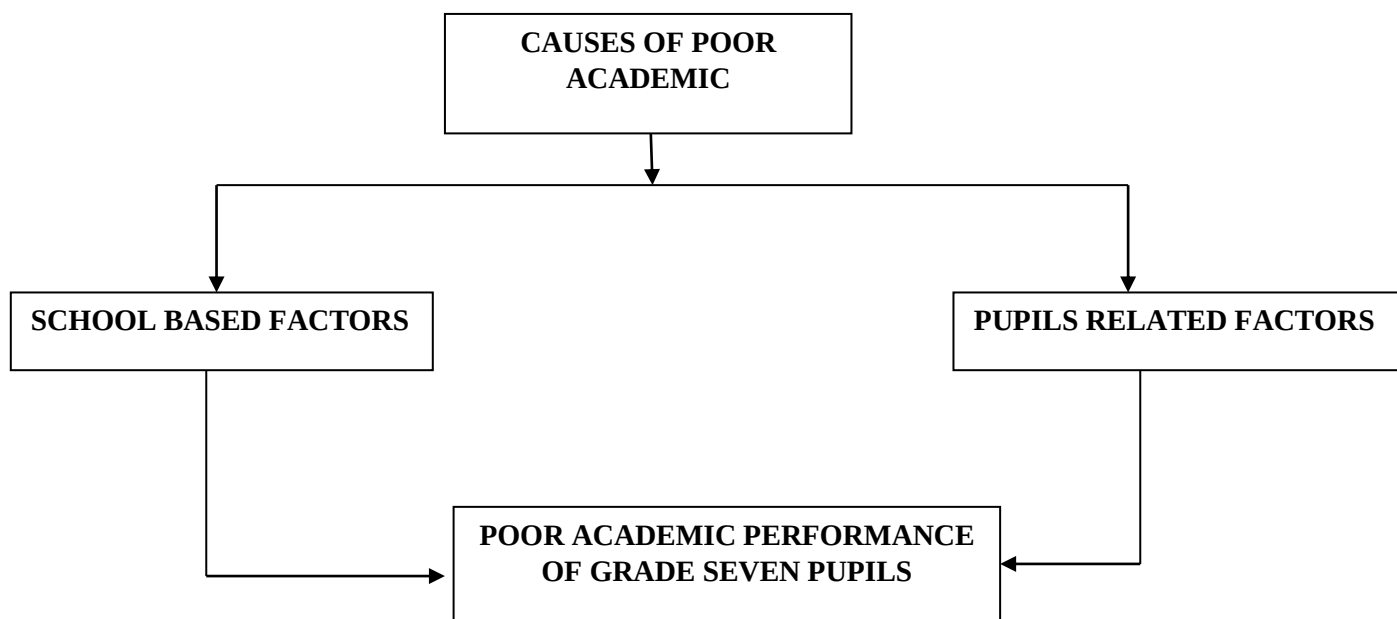
The Scottish physicist James C. Maxwell is attributed with a saying; there is nothing as practical as a good theory. Therefore, by the same demonstration, what would work for our pupils are driven by theories. A wide conviction persists that “teaching is a straight forward venture” which entails directing learners what they should study and do (Broom, 1973). However, if someone buys the idea from constructivism “learning theory.” Constructivism gives rise to the idea that learners are not passive recipients of information, but that they actively construct their knowledge in interaction with the surroundings and through the reformation of their mental structures (Broom, 1973). Environment influences learning through experiences, exposure to models, and teaching. Thus, learning is a reconstruct of the environment, so what is learned is only accurate to the extent to which it reflects the environment. Furthermore, constructivism theory holds that learning is social and occurs from interactions between people in the environment (Mege, 2014:15).

The growing evidence in support of the constructive nature of learning was also in line with and backed by the earlier work of influential theorists such as Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner

(Johnson, 2015:126). In other words this theory supports that in order for effective learning to take place, the learning environment must be favorable with necessary teaching and learning aid. The school administrators should be involved actively in the daily running of the learning institutions and making sure that they are well equipped with qualified personnel (Mege, 2014:11). Moreover, the teacher-pupil and the pupil-pupil rapport should be good and encouraging. The main questions to be addressed therefore are that, what is the nature of the learning environment in selected primary schools in Mungwi? How do the pupil related factors and the school based factors contribute to the low academic performance of learners in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District of Northern Province?

1.8. Conceptual framework

Conceptual framework has been defined as a description of the main independent and dependent variables of the study and the relationship among them (Ogula,1998). The conceptual framework shows the interrelationship between various school based factors and pupil related factors thought to contribute to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in selected primary schools of Mungwi district. School based factors are facilities such as adequacy of physical facilities and management, class size, the qualifications and the attitude of teachers towards teaching, effective teachers' supervision and quality curriculum implementation are very important variables which fall under the school based factors. Coming to pupil related factors, there are variables like pupils' absenteeism, social economical status, pupil's altitude towards learning and distance from school will be put into considerations. Both school based and pupil related factors play a very important role in the academic performance of pupils. Diagrammatically conceptual frame work has been presented as follows:



1.9. Significance of the study

The study will give an understanding of the need to providing an enabling academic atmosphere both at home and school. It is important in that it will help to bring out interventions that would improve learner performance to reduce absenteeism in the district. It will also encourage parents to be playing a pivotal role in the education of their children through encouraging them attending school regularly and helping them to do home work.

The research reveals the important role that school environment plays in the realization of good performance. The quality of education not only depends on a teacher but also on the effective coordination of the school environment. It is believed that a well planned school will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate good academic performance. Everything within the school environment has an influence on the teaching-learning process. Hence, this study will reveal the role the School environment play in the learning of our children.

In addition, this study will help the teachers to have positive attitude towards teaching, because good performance cannot be achieved without their commitment. Teachers need to be reporting for duty regularly and punctual all the time. It was believed that teachers are the role models among their learners hence the need for them to be committed with effective teaching.

Educational administrators will get relevant data on the influence of the School based factors and the pupil related factors on academic performance. Therefore, this study would help the school administrators to take necessary measures to improve the situation in Mungwi District.

The study will also give other stake holders such as Non Governmental Organizations and Co-operating partners the influence of both the School based factors and the pupil related factors on academic performance. It will further reveal to them what should be done in order to iron out the problem of low academic performance. Because stakeholders play a very important role in the management of education in this country.

Lastly, the study will also likely to perform as a foundation for further research on educational matters in Mungwi District. I will provoke other scholars to carry out further researches as research helps to find solutions to the challenges and problems that Mungwi District and the country at large is facing.

1.10. Assumptions of the Study

The study made the following assumptions:

- (1). That all respondents are to co-operate and provide the essential data without partiality.
- (2). That the head teachers and teachers have kept records on pupil performance, pupil enrolment and pupil attendance.
- (3). That the educational stakeholders in Mungwi District are aware of how performance can be improved in primary schools

1.11. The limitations of the study

According to Best and Khan (1993) in Mega (2014) limitations are conditions beyond the ability of the researcher that may place restriction on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations. The first limitation was that the research did not reflect performance in each specific subject, but the general performance. The other limitation was on the part of the researcher to carry out the research in all the schools of Mungwi District, the researcher only collected data from the sampled Schools. The data was only collected from seven (7) head teachers with Grade Seven Examination Centres, ten (10) grade seven teachers and twenty one (21) grade seven pupils in Mungwi District of Northern Province which is situated in the Eastern part of the province.

1.12. Definition of operational terms

The following terms are defined within the context of this study.

Assessment: This is a task or duty assigned as part of a job or course of study.

Free Primary: Refers to a situation where access to primary education is without any Educational fees or levies.

Poor academic performance: This refers to the inferior standard or low quality of academic performance.

Grade seven (7): This refers to the level of education at which learners are expected to write the first national examinations that made them qualify to grade eight (8).

Resources: Refers to the things like manpower (teachers), equipments, materials and facilities that are used to enhance learning and teaching.

School based factors: Refer to the movable and immovable objects in schools that bring comfort to the learners. They include classrooms, science kit, offices, toilets, desks. Instructional materials that teachers use in class to facilitate teaching and learning. They include text books, exercise books, revision books, chalk, wall maps and charts, atlas. They also include teacher commitment to duty and the school administration. School based factors are those aspects within the pupils' school surrounding that influence the performance of learners.

Pupil based factors: These refer to pupil's attitude towards education, rate of absenteeism and social economic status.

1.13. Summary

This chapter introduced the study into the poor academic performance of pupils at grade seven in selected schools of Mungwi District. It started with the background of the study, showing the importance of education and what the government of the republic of Zambia has done in order to improve the quality of education and making it a human right. It has further explained how all these efforts are hindered by the poor academic performance of learners. It also gave the statement of the problem in which the academic performance of Mungwi District for the past two years has been given in percentages. The objectives of the study and the research questions were

also given. The theoretical and conceptual framework of the investigation were also given; as one based on the constructivism “learning theory”. The chapter concludes by looking at the assumption of the study, giving out some of the limitations and defining the terms used in the dissertation. The next chapter looks at some of the available literature which is deemed to be directly significant to the current research.

CHAPTER TWO (2)

LITERATURE VIEW

2.0. Overview

The literature review pays attention on school based factors that contribute to the poor performance of pupils in selected schools of Mungwi District. The chapter focuses on school based factors under the following sub headings: Adequacy and management of physical facilities such as classroom accommodation, science kit or laboratories, desks, text books, exercise books, chalk to name but a few will be followed. These are also known as teaching and learning materials. Class size, attitude of teachers towards teaching, assessments and School supervision will also be looked at. Pupil related factors will also be done by looking at variables like pupils' rate of absenteeism, pupils' lateness, pupils' attitude towards education and the chapter will end with the conclusion.

2.1. School based factors and the academic performance of learners

School environmental factors are those aspects within the pupils' surrounding at school that influence the performance of learners. The school environment is an important aspect of educational planning. The quality of education not only depends on the teacher as reflected on performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the school environment (Ajao, 2001) quoted in Chuma (2012). It is believed that a well planned school will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate good social, political and economic liberation, effective teaching and learning process and academic performance of pupils. Everything within the school environment has an influence on the teaching-learning process. In this study, adequacy of physical facilities and management, instructional materials, class size, the qualification of teachers, the attitude of teachers towards teaching and the effective teachers' supervision and quality curriculum implementation are some factors within the school environment that were found to have an influence on the process of teaching-learning hence the school environment remains an important area that should be studied and well managed to enhance pupils academic performance (Kilel 2012) in (Mege 2014) .

2.2. Adequacy of physical facilities, management and the academic performance of learners.

The image of a school is dependent on the quality of its infrastructure. The physical facilities of the school have a variety of effects on teachers, students and academic performance. These comprise of administrative offices, staffrooms, classrooms, laboratories, workshop equipment stores, libraries, hostels, staff houses and school ground. Physical facilities in terms of adequacy and quality have been noted to have great impact on performance of students in examinations. In a study which was carried out by Heyneman and Loxley (1993) on the effect of availability of physical facilities on academic performance discovered that presence of school library related significantly to achievement in Brazil, China, Botswana and Uganda.

The library is an essential factor in the teaching-learning process. Fuller (1986) in Mege(2014) identified a library as an instructional resource which may significantly influence the teaching-learning process and eventually the performance of pupils. Ayoo (2002) agree that school environment such as; classrooms, desks and books have a direct impact on good performance among the students in developing countries. Classrooms are a place that pupils spend the greatest part of their day.

Schools with adequate facilities such as text books and other instructional materials stand a better chance of having better results than poorly equipped ones (Kombo, 1988). Psychologists assert the same, with the suggestion that “All that we hear and see we learn about ten percent through our sense of hearing and eighty percent or more through the sense of sight. We retain twenty percent of all that we hear and half of all that we both see and hear (Kombo, 1988). This view consequently shows that learners benefit a lot when they are able to use all the five senses through the use of a variety of teaching and learning aids. This simply means that students’ chances of perception, understanding and retention of subject matter greatly improve.

In another research carried out by Kabui (1992) it was proved that there was a connection between availability of text books and academic performance, where the main activity was problem solving. To the young inexperienced teachers, textbooks are very important because they depend on them more than the experienced teachers. Lack of adequate textbooks therefore makes teaching a very difficult task for such teachers.

Wabuoba (2011) noted that one of the factors that caused low performance was lack of learning and teaching materials, which caused lack of motivation to learners. Eshiwani (1988), states that most schools which perform poorly spend less money on the purchases of teaching/learning resources. Furthermore, Court and Ghai (1974) attached greater importance on the distribution of resources such as textbooks and equipment as a major factor that accounts for scholastic differences among schools. Berthoud (2000) observed that as they teach, good teachers keep in mind both what they teach and what they teach with. It is the proper organization of learning resources and use of appropriate teaching and learning strategies which enhance the acquisition of the subject matter.

Physical facilities like classrooms, libraries, workshops, laboratories and the nature of environment for learning contribute effectively to performance. Gakuru (1982) indicates that the condition of school buildings is an important aspect in the learning process. For example, teachers are able to leave their teaching aids in classrooms with lockable doors and windows for as long as they wish. Those who are forced to pull them down at the end of every day feel unmotivated to use them. The Government of Zambia in MoE (1996) noted that congestion within classrooms affect the teaching /learning environment. The quality and adequacy of physical facilities and equipment have a direct bearing on quality of education. This is because Learning resources and materials are basic requirements for education and must be available to learners in sufficient amount and excellence at the time they are required for effective teaching and learning. These resources range from classrooms, desks, science equipments laboratories, textbooks and other materials. Lack of these facilities in the school will definitely have negative impact on the academic achievements of the students and also affect implementation of the curriculum (Matomombo, 2013).

Another Study concerning academic performance although not done at primary level but at secondary level in physics and chemistry conducted by Orodho (1996) found that there was a positive and significant relationship between students' achievements in science and the level of adequacy of science textbooks, laboratories, textbooks and exposure to practical exercises. Availability of teaching and learning resources contribute a lot to students achievements. Eshiwani (1983) stated that difference in school facilities such as libraries, laboratories, playing fields and electricity would seem to account for difference in academic performance. He found

that the schools that performed consistently well possessed adequate teaching and learning resources. Thus the presence or absences of school facilities could dispose high achieving and low achieving schools.

In a similar study Eshiwani et al (1988) observed that most of the schools, whose students performed poorly, spent less money on the purchase of teaching resources. Lack of adequate textbooks and teaching materials makes teaching difficulties as students are unable to do their oral or written work during class lesson. Kombo (1988) affirmed that availability and the use of teaching aids/resources in schools are among the factors which may explain why poor performance in examinations is a characteristic of Primary schools of Mungwi District. According to him schools with adequate resources such as laboratories, textbooks, and other instructional materials would stand a better chance of having better results than poorly equipped ones. The availability and the use of teaching and learning resources could contribute to high level of quality of education and performance of students. However schools with abundant teaching and learning resources may not always effectively utilize them and this may also result in student poor performance.

There is clear evidence that there is a strong relationship between adequate provision of books and achievement. Textbooks are often the most cost effective means of improving academic achievement and increasing the efficiency of schools (Psachropoulous& Wood hall, 1995). Avalos (1991) pointed out that the value of education the learners obtain bears direct significance to the availability or lack of teaching and learning aids. Schools with adequate facilities such as textbooks and other instructional materials stand a better chance of having better results than poorly equipped ones. Textbook ratio should be one book per three pupils in lower primary and one book per two pupils in upper primary (Matomombo, 2003). Sharing of these books may have an impact on the teaching learning process since sometimes a pupil may be absent from school yet he/she had the book hence inconveniencing the colleague.

Moreover, teaching and learning materials availability influences the level of academic performance. Where these materials (i.e., textbooks, laboratory equipment, carpentry tools, etc.) are not available, it can cause low academic performance as teaching and learning becomes ineffective. It is noted that the availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons (Etsey, 2005).

This is because the use of teaching and learning materials will influence pupils' comprehension of lessons. The creative use of a variety of media was found to increase the chance that the students would learn more, keep better what they learn, and improve their performance on the skills that they are to develop (Brooms, 1993). Furthermore, it is reported that children are capable of understanding abstract ideas if they are provided with enough materials and concrete experience with the phenomenon they are to understand (Etsey, 2005). However, in a study that was done by Asikhia (2010) a different finding was made. In that study, the writer found that learning materials did not influence poor academic performance. This challenges the generally held view that teaching and learning materials are fundamental causes of poor academic performance.

Teaching and Learning Materials According to Crawford (1996) in Manda (2013) teaching and learning materials include books, worksheets or readers; non-print materials such as cassettes or audio materials, videos and even materials that are not designed for instructional use, such as magazines, newspapers and TV materials. Teaching materials provide the basis for the content of lessons, the balance of skills taught, and the kinds of language practice students take part in. Crawford (1996) further says that materials may provide the major sources of information apart from the teacher. The type of teaching and learning materials can have a bearing on the results of the pupils, hence the probe in the type of materials used in the teaching of sufficient quality and quantity resources and facilities determine how effectively the process of teaching and learning takes place. Fuller (1986) found that instructional materials such as textbooks, visual and audio materials not only enhance communication among teachers and learners, but also facilitate child centered learning through discovery. With the availability of text books pupils will be able to read on their own while at home and do their homework. Quality educational provision requires the supply of books, writing materials and educational items in sufficient quality to meet the needs of all students (MOE, 1996).

However, it is essential to find out that schools with abundant teaching and learning resources may not always utilize them professionally for the greatest benefits of raising the students' level of attainment whilst those with limited resources may utilize whatever they have competently to raise the quality of teaching and learning and consequently performance is improved (Mege, 2014).

The quality education requires the availability and use of textbooks and other educational materials. Without these aids to the learning process, effective teaching and learning in the modern sense cannot take place. Suitable materials enable pupils to acquire and apply knowledge, to learn at their own pace and to assess their own progress. Although considerable improvements have been made in recent years in the provision of educational materials, these still remain critically short in many schools (MOE, 1996).

Availability of good quality instructional materials is an important factor on pupils' achievement. Thus a well- produced and easily available reference material is an important asset. Matomombo (2003) noted that no meaningful teaching-learning can take place without adequate instructional materials. Manda (2013) pointed that adequately well prepared instructional materials determine the amount of learning that can take place in a learning institution. Good quality instructional materials can motivate interest, maintain concentration and make learning more meaningful. Learners cannot learn well in the classrooms that are typically bare, with few or no desks, no teacher's table or chair, and a broken chalkboard (MOE, 1996). The objective of the researcher was to find out whether the adequacy and management of physical and material resources have an impact on the academic performance of learners.

2.3. Class size and academic performance of learners

The influence of class size has a great impact on the teaching-learning process which in turn affects the academic performance. The smaller the class size, the easier it is for the teacher-learner interaction, consequently improving the academic performance since the teacher will be able to give the learner individual attention. Large class size impacts negatively to the teaching-learning process since the teacher is not even able to move freely to assess the pupils work as they do their exercises. According to (Smith, 2012) in India, small class size leads to engagement of the learner, increased participation, and attentiveness.

Smaller class size allows educators to center more on the learners in their teaching. This leads to coming up with better understanding and adjust their methods to diverse individual needs. Large class size makes monitoring of pupils' performance very complicated consequently encouraging pupils' laziness, and the quality of feedback to pupils become very low hence making the teaching learning process ineffective which a ventrally results into low academic performance of learners (Bascia, 2003).

Wabuoba (2011) and Chuma (2012) quoted in mege (2014) observed that overcrowding in classrooms make it difficult for pupils to write, the teacher is also unable to move around the class to assist needy pupils and this affects the teaching-learning process, which in the end affects academic performance. Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for learners to concentrate but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work.

In addition, the small class size allows for individualized attention and this strengthens the cordial relationship between the teachers and learners. Organization of a large class is a serious problem in many schools as it creates demanding working conditions for the teachers and leads to higher teacher absenteeism (Corcoran, Walker and White, 1988). It was observed that overcrowding in class rooms make it difficult for the pupils to write and the teacher is also unable to move around to help the needy pupils(Wabuoba,2011). Mege (2014) noted that crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for learners to concentrate but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work.

Several studies have shown that large classes are usually associated with challenges such as poor sitting arrangements, and students feeling isolated and less motivated (Kerr, 2011). Other studies that have examined the effects of class size and found that students in the smaller classes performed better academically than those from larger class sizes. For example, it was exposed that students in the smaller classes achieved test scores that were higher than their peers in the larger classes, on the mathematics and reading tests, respectively (Adunola, 2013).

Similarly, In the study done by Achills (1995) it was discovered that class size is an important determinant of academic performance and that schools with smaller class sizes do better academically than schools with larger class sizes. It was clear that a class size above 40 has negative effects on students' achievement. In support of the effect of class size on academic performance, another researcher added that, since children have differences in drive, interests, and abilities and that they also differ in health, personal and social adjustment, and creativity, generally good teaching is best done in classes with smaller numbers that allow for personal attention (Broom,1995).

Overcrowding has been found to have a deleterious effect on learner's performance (Hakalo, 2014). As well, chronic noise exposure hinders cognitive functioning, which is essential in the learning (Haines, 2001). Maxwell & Evans, (2000) said that overcrowded schools are a serious problem in many school systems, where space for new construction and funding for such construction are limited. As a result, students find themselves trying to learn while jammed into spaces never intended as classrooms, such as laboratories etc. Although research on the relationship between overcrowding and learner performance has been limited, there is some evidence, particularly in high-poverty schools, that overcrowding can have an adverse impact on pupils learning as chronic noise exposure hinders cognitive functioning, which is essential in the learners performance (Hakalo, 2014).

Howe, & Rua, (2000) in Hakalo (2014) found that overcrowding and heavy teacher workloads created stressful working conditions for teachers and led to higher teacher absenteeism. Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for both boys and girls to concentrate in their lessons, but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work or, indeed on teaching anything beyond the barest minimum of required material. Therefore teachers resort to concentration on the active participants.

2.4. The qualifications of teachers and the academic performance of learners

First and foremost, teacher qualification has been consistently found to impact the academic performance of pupils. A teacher who lacks the professional skill will be unable to deliver in class, which will induce poor student's performance. A teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional qualifications would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of a given subject (Etsey, 2005)

It is further argued that a teacher who is academically and professionally qualified, but works under unfavorable conditions of service, would be less dedicated to his work and thus be less productive than a teacher who is unqualified but works under favorable conditions of service. In a particular study, it was discovered that teachers and students blame each other for poor academic performance (Asikhia, 2010). In that study, while the teachers noted their qualification

did not account for poor academic performance of students, the students, however, noted that it accounted for the poor academic performance.

3.5. The attitude of teachers towards teaching and the academic performance of learners

Furthermore, available literature on school environmental factors that cause poor academic performance has found teachers' drive as a significant variable. In a particular study, it was argued that drive is a critical factor that influences a teacher's work attitude and that a highly motivated person puts in the greatest effort into his or her job (Etsey, 2005). The effect of such efforts is that the students will benefit from effective teaching which has the likelihood of making them improve their academic performance. Similarly, another study revealed that lack of drive and professional commitment produces poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students, which, in turn, affects pupils' performance academically (Kerr, 2011). This kind of unprofessional attitudes may lead to loss of many instructional hours which cannot be regained.

A teacher should be a prospector looking for gold. A teacher was not supposed to be authoritative and a strict disciplinarian who punished children if they talked in class, he should be a guide and a facilitator. He should organize group activities, allow pupil movements and talk and also allow the pupils to initiate their own activities. A good teacher is one who is creative in selecting appropriate teaching-learning strategies that motivate the interest of his/her learners (Branden, 2013).

The attitude and expectation of learners are greatly influenced by their teachers (Breakwell, 2000). The pupils learning in particular offer is likely to win approval from parents, teachers and peers. Consequently, very few pupils will join school unless they receive considerable encouragement and a model to do so from their teacher. In addition, teachers play a central role in the creation of self-differentiated values and self-perceptions. These effects are not necessarily intentional; teachers are often unaware of things they are doing which discourage their pupils from studying (Jordanova, 1980). The objective of the researcher was to find out whether teachers' attitudes towards teaching have any influence on academic performance in Mungwi District of Northern Province.

2.6. The effective teachers' supervision, quality curriculum implementation and the Academic performance of learners of learners

The quality assurance and standard is responsible for the control of the quality of education at all levels throughout the country. This is achieved through inspection, guidance and advice to all schools in the country. Such inspection includes visits to institutions for checking on facilities, equipments, administration and actual teaching by individual member of as staff. During such visits, quality assurance and standard officer may give advice to both head teacher and staff on such matter necessary to improve the quality of instruction in the school (Smith, 2012).

Mbithi (1974) identified the overall role of the inspectorate as that of “controlling the quality of education at all levels throughout the country through inspection, guidance and advice to all schools in the country”. To this extent then the key role of inspectorate personnel concerns activities which ensure that the supervision of educational programmes and resources are carried out efficiently. Among such personnel are the district quality assurance and standards officers. The concern of such personnel would be to make sure that educational administrators perform their roles as expected and that instructional practice is conducted within the reasonable bound of set objective (MOE, 1996).

Matomombo (2003) added that Inspection and supervision must be carried out periodically so that the standards of education are regularly assessed and controlled. The inspection and supervision reports are meaningless unless they are followed by action. Supervision must be comprehensive in scope and it should be directed towards all factors involved in pupils learning. Supervisor must be more experience than the teachers they supervise; provision should be made to aid school inspectors' easy access to the schools. With little inspection, schools are likely to continue performing poorly.

King (1991) identifies what to supervisor, tools and skills to be used in a functional education programme. According to King, the following are supervised: output, attendance, drop-outs, enrolment, and level of participation, quality of discussions, supply and use of materials and content and quality of participants' books. Tools to supervise are: class registers, record books, timetables. There are three priorities for a supervising and assessment system programs: to document the number of learners who participate, to document the number of instructional or

contact hours the learners receive, and to measure and document levels of skill in reading, writing gained through participation (King,1991).

In another research which was carried out by Acharya and Joshi (2009) discovered that monitoring and assessment would be effective only if each of the stakeholders finds value in it. Learners, instructors, government and other educational players are identified as the primary stakeholders. Learners have an interest in monitoring and assessing their learning and should be full participants in the assessment process. Inspectors have an interest in a system that facilitates teaching and learning and informs instruction and program development. Government has an interest in seeing the learning enhanced and requires reliable ways to measure changes in literacy rates. Monitoring of educational programmes is a vital ingredient for successful implementation and should be integrated in the programme plan. Unfortunately, most of the time, this is hardly the case. Adequate funds are not provided and required information about status of programmes is not readily available (Efumbi, 2002).

Primary school syllabus coverage determines pupils' performance in examination since, pupils are tested normally from any topic in the syllabus and if any school doesn't cover up all the work in the syllabus and then pupils will be disadvantaged. Good syllabus coverage will depend on time management in the school by head teacher, teachers and students. Campbell (1986) observes that effective and efficient management of curriculum and instruction in educational institution is a basic prerequisite for stability and improvement of academic performance.

In addition, Comber and Keves (1973) stated that within limits, the more hours allowed to instruction in subject, the higher the achievements. Similarly at the end of primary school, the more the homework given and corrected the better the students performance in examinations. This implies that good time management by the teachers would ensure effective syllabus coverage. Eshiwani (1986) affirmed the importance and usefulness of providing extra coaching to pupils who are preparing for major national examination. Frequent exposure of students to test can improve examination performance, promptness in giving and making homework assist in identifying areas of weakness to be improved.

Branden (2013) stated that when there is low teacher absenteeism and high level of group involvement in planning for curriculum instruction, this can enhance better syllabus coverage. Learning time can be maximized when classroom time is used effectively, for instance when

teachers waste less time by starting and ending instructional activities, select curriculum materials which are appropriate to the students and when teachers spend more time preparing for the lessons, these preparations raises the quality of instruction and coverage of syllabus within specified time and improves students achievements. Kimani (2002) asserts in his study that there are three means of monitoring progress in curriculum implementation namely; continuous assessment, mid-term examination and checking learners notebooks. His study found out that through delegation of duties, head teachers assign heads of department to scrutinize schemes of work and record of work covered by the teachers. However, this study tries to qualify that by looking at professional documents like schemes of work, lessons notes, lesson plans, and records of work, and then the teaching and learning of the subject in question is effective. This is not necessarily the case since all these could be put in place but the use of this document in the teaching and learning process matters a lot.

Mtume (2005) carried out a survey and it was discovered that the head teacher should support the teachers through lesson observation, professional counseling discussions on professional documents, learners' participatory assessment methods and provision of feedback to learners. According to Mbithi (1974) administration is defined as a formalized system which is intended to control, supervise, plan and make decision about basis of established authority. Duignan (1986) identified that school leadership are a crucial factor in the success of a school. He mentioned activities that constitute effective leadership by the school principal to include: setting an atmosphere of order, creating a climate of high expectations of staff and students, encouraging collegial and collaborative relationships and building commitment among students and staff to the school goals. Furthermore the head teacher has a role of translating educational policies and objectives into programme within the school. The head teacher is also expected to execute administrative function as well as instructional supervision.

Sifuna (1988) asserted that factors such as lack of clear communication, poor relationships between head teachers, teachers and students, inefficient instructional policies and practices, and leaving parents out of school activities contributes to poor performance in high school. The objective of the researcher was to find out whether the management of curriculum implementation and supervision in the primary schools has any influence on the performance of pupils in Mungwi District.

Neagley and Evans (1970) stated that effective monitoring and supervision of teachers' activities is an important factor furthermore, effective supervision of instruction can improve teaching and learning quality in the classroom. This denotes that if teaching is not supervised effectively, teachers may not do their duties diligently and this might lead to pupils performing poorly academically. In addition, it is concluded in another study that academic performance was better in private schools than in public schools because of more effective supervision of work (Etsey, Amedahe, and Edjah,2005). This illustrates that poor supervision leads to poor academic performance of pupils since teachers may relax in the performance of their responsibilities.

2.7.0. Pupil related factors and the academic performance of learners

Pupil related factors, these are factors that concern pupils themselves and they play a very important role in the academic performance of learners. They are factors such as pupils' altitude towards education, rate of absenteeism, social economic status, parent's levels of education, and distance from school and pupils attitude towards learning.

2.7.1. Absenteeism from school and the academic performance of learners

Most studies and literature indicates that learner absenteeism was the beginning a serious challenge in education. For example, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) observed that many children who are normally enrolled in school do not attend class on a regular basis. Other scholars like Bennett (2010) in Examination Council of Zambia (2013) have actually stated that although there have been concerted efforts among various stakeholders to reduce absenteeism in schools; challenges still exist as many learners continue to absent themselves from classes. Reimer and Smink (2005) in Cooperkline (2009) add that school absenteeism within the public school system in America had reached a crisis point. Wadesango and Machingombi (2011) equally acknowledged absenteeism as a serious problem in Africa, particularly among South African students.

Absenteeism from school by pupils may be one of the factors that contribute to low academic performance. Davis (1989) observed that absenteeism causes low self-concept of academic ability leading to low attainment in school. Children who through their domestic and personal circumstances are forced to acquire adult status too early often become persistent absentees.

Thereafter, school life becomes boring, irrelevant, petty and restrictive. Such attitudes lead to withdrawal and conflict.

Culturally the young children assist their parents in domestic chores. Ngao (1991) observes that some children are withdrawn from school by parents in rural areas to assist in household chores that include babysitting younger siblings, accompanying parents to hospitals, collecting firewood and water among others. The girl child does most of this work but where there are no girls, the boys are used to perform the same tasks. Chronic absenteeism will affect performance as they are not regular to cover and grasp all the concepts.

Absenteeism rates at primary and junior secondary school continue to pose challenges in the attainment of quality education in Zambia despite the introduction of Free Primary Education. A trend analysis of examination candidature revealed that absenteeism was on the rise. This situation raised a lot of concerns from various stakeholders in the education system (MOE, 2014).

2.7.2. Social economic status, Parent's Level of Education and the academic performance of learners

The study conclude that learners from poor families and those from households engaged in agriculture or livestock-raising were more likely to be absent from school. In Africa, a study was conducted in Uganda by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (2010) to measure the extent of and reasons for teacher absenteeism.

Parents' level of education influence pupils' performance in the sense that educated parents value education and they encourage their own children to value education and to actively engage themselves in studies. In a study conducted in Kenya by Ezewu and Obanya (1988) it was found that the higher the levels of education of parents, the more likely it motivates children to learn and perform better. Kundu and Tuto (2000) found that home background has a significant influence on the achievement of children at school because educated parents tend to offer more psychological, social and financial support to their children, thus giving them the opportunity to excel in their studies.

Social economic status is most commonly determined by combining parents' education level,

occupation status and income level (Jeynes,2002).in most of the studies on academic performance of students, it is not surprising that social economic status is one of the major factors studied while predicting academic performance. It is believed that low social economic status negatively affects academic achievement because low social economic status prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home.

In another research that was carried out on social economic status by Eamon (2005) in education research and policy found that social economic background remains one of the major sources of educational inequality and adds that one's educational success depends strongly on the social economic status of one's parents. Graertz (1995)in his study on influence social economic disadvantage in academic performance of school students in Australia found that families where the parents are advantaged socially, educationally and economically foster a higher level of achievement in their children. They also found that these parents provide higher level of psychological support for their children through environments that encourage the development of skills necessary for success at school.

In addition, parent's ability to take them to good schools, parent's willingness to help them in school work and ability to buy supplementary books boost their performance (Somerset 1972). A study conducted by Prewitt in Kenya on parents' education showed that parents' level of education is very crucial for the performance of their children because educated parents send their children to school early, in most cases at the age of five to six. Ezewu andObanya (1988) pointed out that children who join primary schools at early age also complete their primary education early. They also found that educated parents provide adequate learning materials for their children, which stimulate them to learn and perform better in all subjects.

Moreover, these parents are concerned over their children's education or performance, which sometimes makes them coach their children themselves or appoint part-time teachers for them. They send their children to the best nursery and primary schools which serves as sure gateways to grade eight(8) or secondary and university education which in turn leads to higher educational qualification to occupy higher positions in societies. Owen (1999) in her study exploring beliefs about academic achievement studied the relationship between parents' educational attainment and found that the educational attainment of parents have a relationship with educational achievement of their children.

A Socio- economic status of a pupil' parent is crucial factor influencing pupils' academic performance. For example, the families with low income and large numbers of children in schools are unable to meet financial needs for fees and feeding them well (ECZ,2013). Despite their mental ability, the average economic home will go to the average performing schools while those financially endowed will go for highly performing schools because their parents affords (World Bank 1980). Poor families have lower aspirations for their children than upper class due to the opportunity cost of the child. According to Todaro (1977), children from good social economic background tend to perform better in schools as result of good parent education standards, high income, and proximity to urban areas where the best schools are found.

2.7.3. Distance from School and the academic performance of learners

Various studies have been done to determine causes of poor performance in primary schools. Etsey (2005) carried out a survey amongst primary schools to identify causes of poor performance in primary schools in Ghana. The study revealed that factors responsible for poor performance included distance from the school for the pupils. Pupils who spend a lot of time on their way to and from school tend to lag behind in academic achievement. Their study habit and time set aside for doing assignment is interfered with seriously which in return affect examination performance.

2.7.4. Pupils attitude towards learning and the academic performance of learners

Attitude is an important aspect in learning and it can either hinder or enhance the learning. Therefore a pupil who is highly motivated to learn and sees its usefulness can make better progress than one who has a lower degree of aspirations, interest and motivation. When pupils are motivated, they can appreciate the value of education and chances to perform are too high (KESSP, 2006) in (Garuiya, 2013).

Neagley (1980) on learners' attitude toward learning in primary schools agrees that though overall enrollment in primary schools has risen over the past decades, learners' conceptual participation in schools remains deficient. In addition, this situation is exacerbated for females who have more negative attitudes towards learning (Nunan, 2000). On pupils' interest in learning, according to the survey that was carried out in Finland attributes interest as a

characteristic of a person. It is aroused as a function of interestingness of a content and context and partially under the regulation of the teacher (Todd, 2000).

McDiarmid (1995) in Garuiya (2013) on gender gap and classroom interactions: found out that 63 per cent of boys said they liked learning, and this fell to 37 per cent for girls. Child-rearing practices which diminish learners' self - confidence may be particularly detrimental to their education. Halliday (1977) found that in Wales's, girls and boys tend to rate mathematics among the most difficult subjects at school. But whereas boys will prefer these subjects and choose to study them in spite of their difficulty, girls tend to prefer the subjects they think are easier.

The current study explores the ways in which the attitudes of learners affect learning and their influence on academic performances. This is because learner influence to a large extent, the effectiveness learning process and all this depends on their attitudes towards their work. Mwale (2001) carried out a survey in Malawi on school learners' attitudes towards the teaching and learning in primary schools. The purpose of the study was to examine the learners' attitudes towards learning and their effect on performance. The study found out that majority of the learners disagreed that they hated learning. The learners had a strong desire to learn. However, teachers frustrated them by embarrassing them.

Another Study concerning academic performance although not done at primary level but at secondary level in physics and chemistry conducted in Zambia by Matomombo (2003) found that there was a positive and significant relationship between students' achievements in science and the level of adequacy of science textbooks, laboratories and exposure to practical exercises.

However, no research has been conducted in Mungwi District to explore the ways in which other school based factors such as class size, teacher qualification, teachers' attitude and the pupil related factors influence performance.

Hence, this research will be carried out to investigate specifically the School based factors and the pupil related factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven (7) Final Examinations and suggest the necessary interventions in order to resolve the problem in Mungwi District.

2.8. Summary

In this chapter various forms of international and local literatures had been discussed. literature on how School based factors and pupil related factors contribute to the poor academic performance of learners in Mungwi District had been revealed. The next chapter will look at the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE (3)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0. Overview

The previous chapter reviewed the global, African and Zambian literature related to the topic of study. This chapter describes the research design and methodology that was applied in carrying out the study in order to achieve the stated objectives. The methodology will be discussed under the following subheadings: research design, target population, sampling techniques, sample size, instruments for data collection, data collection techniques, data analysis, validity of the instruments, reliability of the instruments, ethical considerations and the chapter will close with a summary.

3.1. Research Design

The research design describes the nature of the pattern or framework of research (Smith, 2012). In other words, a design is the plan or strategy for conducting the research. Broadly, this research was qualitative in approach and researcher adopted a descriptive design to determine causes of poor academic performance of learners in Grade Seven final examinations in Mungwi District. The purpose of the descriptive design was to study the relationships that existed, practices that prevailed, beliefs and attitudes held, the processes that were going on and the effects felt or trends that were developing (Mege, 2014). This design was considered pertinent since the researcher was supposed to collect, analyze and report data as it existed on the ground without changing any variable. Three (3) separate semi structured interviews and focus group discussion were used. The first interview was for the grade seven pupils, the second one was for grade seven (7) teachers and the last one was for the head teachers.

3.2. Target population

Target population refers to the total number of subjects or all the people under consideration in any field of inquiry (Smith, 2013). Therefore, the target population for this study consisted of all the ten (10) primary schools in Malole Zone of Mungwi District with grade seven (7) examination centres. From those ten schools the following were selected: seven (7) head teachers

at primary schools with grade seven examination centers, ten (10) grade seven teachers and twenty (20) grade seven (7) pupils in seven public schools of Mungwi District

3.3. Sample size and sampling procedures.

A sample size is a part of the target or accessible population that the researcher has chosen to study on (Smith, 2013). In this research the researcher targeted seven (7) head teachers of Schools with Grade Seven Examination Centres, ten (10) grade seven teachers and twenty one (21) grade seven pupils. This gave the researcher a total number of thirty eight (38) respondents.

TABLE 3.1. COMPOSITION OF THE STUDY SAMPLE

POSITION OF THE RESPONDENTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Head Teachers	7
Grade Seven Teachers	10
Grade Seven Pupils	21

To select seven (7) head teachers of schools and ten (10) grade seven teachers, firstly, the researcher used purposive sampling by considering all the seven schools in Malole Zone where this problem of poor academic performance seems to be more serious than in any other areas. Secondly, simple random sampling was used to select twenty one (21) pupils because it permits all members of the population an equal opportunity of being selected. Three (3) pupils were picked from each of the seven (7) schools. The researcher wrote the names of particular grade (7) pupils in the classes on small pieces of paper and put them in a small box in order to randomly pick the pieces of paper until they were three (3). Teachers of grade seven (7) classes were purposively selected from the selected schools in Mungwi District. Teachers were also purposively selected as they were perceived to have a close relationship with the learners in the selected primary schools of Mungwi District.

3.4. Research instruments

The instruments were interviews and focus group interviews/discussions. The researcher specifically used semi- structured interviews to collect data from teachers, pupils and head

teachers. Focus group discussions were conducted with the pupils. Many researchers like to use semi-structured interviews because questions can be prepared ahead of time. This allows the interviewer to be prepared and appear competent during the interview. Semi-structured interviews also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. Interviews can also provide reliable, comparable qualitative data.

Interviews provided flexibility and the ability to probe and clarify responses, they noted non verbal as well as verbal behavior, and they provided high response rates and were adaptable (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2001). Even though the interviews were costly, time consuming, included interview bias, not anonymous and could contain leading questions, they were used in the study because they allowed for direct interaction with the respondents and the collection of in-depth information that the questionnaires may not gather. Three different semi structured interviews were used to collect data, one for the grade seven pupils, the other one for grade seven teachers and the last one for the head teachers. The semi structured interview guides for the pupils, teachers and for the head teachers, all had ten (10) questions.

3.5. Validity of research instruments

This is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represents the phenomenon under study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Validity also measures the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data represents the truth, credibility, and the right phenomena under the study (Polit and Hungler, 1997). For instruments to be valid the content selected and included in the semi structured interview guide must be relevant to the variables being investigated so as to ascertain the effectiveness of the instruments in soliciting information regarding the topic. This study ensured that the instruments used (semi-structured interview guide and focus group interview guides) were in line with the variables investigated in the study.

3.6. Data analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively as the semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were used as data collection instruments. The data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the semi structured interviews. Processing of data required that each question was answered correctly and accurately, so that there could be uniformity in the manner in which data

was interpreted. The information was gathered and transformed into tables of figures and percentages as responses from respondents were given.

Data processing was important in that it allowed for data analysis. The processing of data in this research was done by developing the code book from the raw information, a table was made to account for the number of people who said 'yes' and 'no' to the questions. The other responses were developed in the graph form. Charts and graphs were used to analyse data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study, the order of the research objectives and questions. These processes emerged from listening to the interviews and deciding how to organize them, in an ongoing cycle (Morrill, LeGrande, Renssen, Bakker, and Otto-Bliesner, 2013) in (Hakalo, 2014).

3.7. Ethical considerations

The reasons for carrying out the research were well explained to the researches before they were permitted to provide any piece of information. The researcher also assured the school administrators that participation by staff and pupils were voluntary. As a way of maintaining confidentiality, the pupils and the schools were called by letters to avoid recognition. Before asking for any piece of information, all participants were assured of total confidentiality and were asked to sign a letter of informed consent and a letter requesting assent of grade seven (7) learners Less than 18 years to participate in the study.. The form clearly stated what was happening in the study, and informed them that they had the freedom to accept or refuse taking part in research. Respondents were informed ahead of time in this case the managers of the selected schools. They were also informed about the nature of the research so that they made a choice whether to participate or not. No information was misinterpreted or misrepresented, and no information was fabricated, exaggerated or omitted to support a particular conclusion in the study.

3.8. Summary

In this section, the chapter looked at the methodology used in the study. It explained the research design. It further explained how the data was collected and analyzed. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR (4)

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Overview

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology used in the study. However, this chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings are presented in the following manner: It started with demographic information of the participants, School based factors will be looked at, this will be followed by pupil related factors, will be done according to the research objectives. The findings from the grade seven teachers are presented alongside those from head teachers and grade seven pupils. Though actual words said by respondents have been used as much as possible in the descriptions, other words have been paraphrased and lastly. the summary will be looked at.

4.2. Demographic Information of participants

This section gives a presentation on the demographic information of all the participants who took part in the study and the interest was gender.

TABLE 4.1. Demographic information

RESPONDENTS	GENDER	
	MALE	FEMALE
Head teacher	4	3
Grade seven teachers	6	4
Grade seven pupils	10	11
TOTAL	20	18

On the demographic information of the respondents, four (4) or fifty seven percent (57%) of head teachers were male and three (3) or forty three percent (43%) were female head teachers. Six (6) or Sixty percent (60%) of grade seven (7) teachers were males and four (4) or forty percent(40%) of grade seven (7) teachers were female. Ten (10) or Forty eight percent (48%) of grade seven (7) pupils were male and eleven (11) or fifty two percent (52%) of pupils were female.

4.3. The school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations of learners

The objective on this theme was to assess the school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District. To achieve this objective, ‘the research question was on the school based factors caused by poor academic performance in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District.’

To discuss the school based factors that have contributed to low academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations, five(5) main themes were emerged: Adequacy of physical facilities and the academic performance, management and academic performance, Class size and academic performance, The qualifications of teachers and the academic performance, the attitude of teachers towards teaching and the academic performance, the effective teachers’ supervision and quality curriculum implementation and the academic performance

4.4. Adequacy of physical facilities, management and the academic performance of learners

The adequacy of physical facilities in institutions of learning improves the teaching-learning process as the learning environment is made conducive. Learning institutions are anticipated to prepare their learners nicely in all academic study areas. The study sought to examine the significance of education by obtaining data on physical facilities and management that would assist to improve effective teaching-learning process. Head teacher, teachers and pupils’ responses on adequacy of physical facilities are shown in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2. ADEQUACY OF PHYSICAL FACILITES

FACILITIES	ADEQUACY	PERCENTAGE (%)	INADEQUACY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Desk	15	39	23	61
Text book	3	8	35	92
Classroom accommodation	12	32	26	68
Exercise books	16	42	22	58
Wall charts	10	26	28	74

The first question was on the availability of physical teaching and learning facilities, the following were the responses: Fifteen (15) or thirty nine percent (39%) pointed out that the Schools had adequate desks. A good number of twenty three (23) or sixty one percent (61%) of respondents pointed out that the schools had inadequate desks. Coming to text books, three (3) or eight percent (8%) of respondents said that there were adequate text books. Thirty five (35) or ninety two percent (92%) of respondent said that there were inadequate text books. Twelve (12) or thirty two percent (32%) pointed out that there was adequate classroom accommodation and twenty six or Sixty eight percent (68%) of the head teachers, teachers and grade seven pupils (respondents) pointed out that there was inadequate classroom accommodation. On exercise books, sixteen (16) or forty two percent (42%) had adequate exercise books while twenty two (22) or fifty eight percent (58%) had inadequate exercise books. With the wall charts, ten (10) or twenty six percent (26%) of respondents had adequate wall charts while twenty eight (28) or seventy four percent (74%) of respondents had inadequate wall charts.

During the interviews, one of the head teachers was asked about the adequacy of physical facilities and how it affects the teaching-learning process. He responded:

In order for effective teaching or learning to take place, the school environment should be conducive by providing all the physical facilities required.

At School A on the availability of text books, a grade seven (7) teacher said the following:

It is difficult to teach when you do not have enough text books, like in my case I have three (3) text books for social studies against seventy pupils. This becomes very difficult for me to deliver quality lessons. So it should be the responsibility of the school administration to see to it that the school is provided with teaching and learning aids.

During a focus group discussion with the pupils at School A one of the pupils pointed out:

There are seventy pupils in our grade seven class and sometimes four (4) pupils share one desk. Text books are also not there in our class. For example, we do not have text books for integrated science; we use the grade six (6) text books.

On the shortage of exercise books for the pupils, the head teacher at School D responded that:

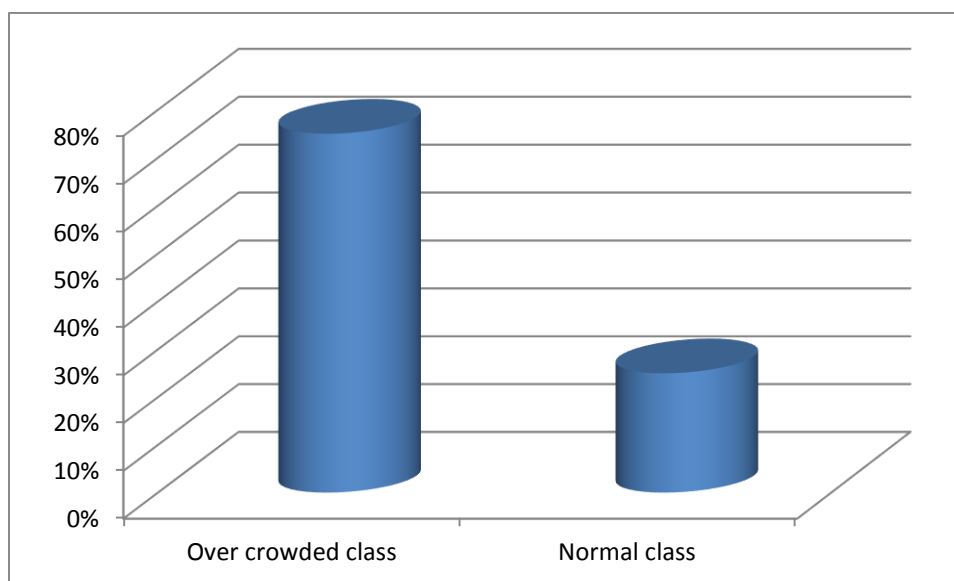
Learners from educated parents have no problem of shortage of exercise books. The problem is with children from parents who are not educated; they hardly provide their children with exercise books.

On wall charts, ten (10) respondents (26%) said that there were wall charts, while twenty eight (28) respondents (74%) said that there were no wall charts. One of the grade seven (7) teachers had this to say:

It is difficult to display wall charts in the class room, because there is no locking system. Each time you put them there, the following day are not there, they have been taken away by unknown people.

4.5. Class size and academic performance of learners

Table 4.3. Class size



This aimed at finding out about how the size of the class affects the academic performance of learners and responses were as follows: Seventy percent (70%) of the head teachers, grade seven (7) teachers and grade seven (7) pupils pointed out that they had the class size that was over fifty pupils. While thirty (30%) of respondents pointed out that their class sizes were not over crowded, they had less than forty five pupils.

During an interview the head teacher for school F, said the following:

there is one hundred and forty (140) grade seven pupils of which grade seven A and B had seventy (70) pupils each instead of forty (40) to forty five (45) pupils according to the government policy. Therefore, there was no effective teaching and learning because teachers cannot do individualized teaching.

In addition to the above on issue of the class size and academic performance of learners, one grade seven teacher at school B said the following:

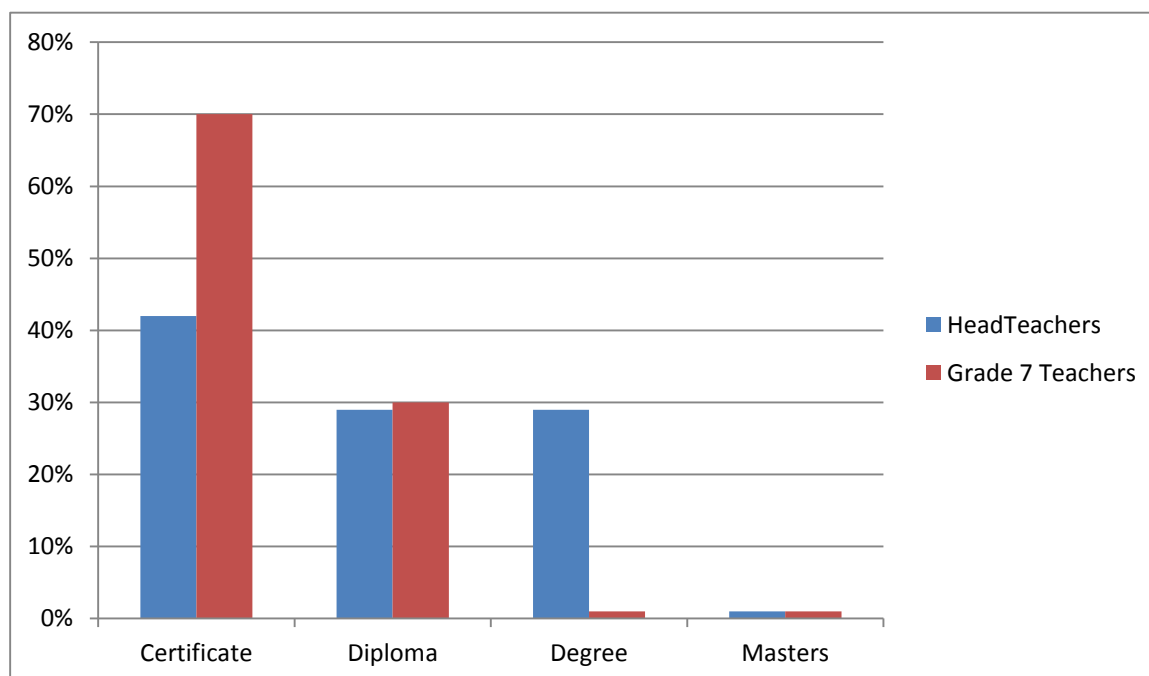
Currently, I am teaching a grade seven (7) class with sixty seven (67) pupils, it affects my teaching in that effective teaching needs one to one contact, if you look at my class size, it has a large number of pupils whereby you cannot contact pupils one by one in one period of forty (40) minutes.

Another grade seven teacher at school D said the following:

I am teaching a grade seven class of forty five pupils and I do not find any problem in interacting with all the learners and I teach it effectively.

4.6. The qualifications of teachers and the academic performance of learners

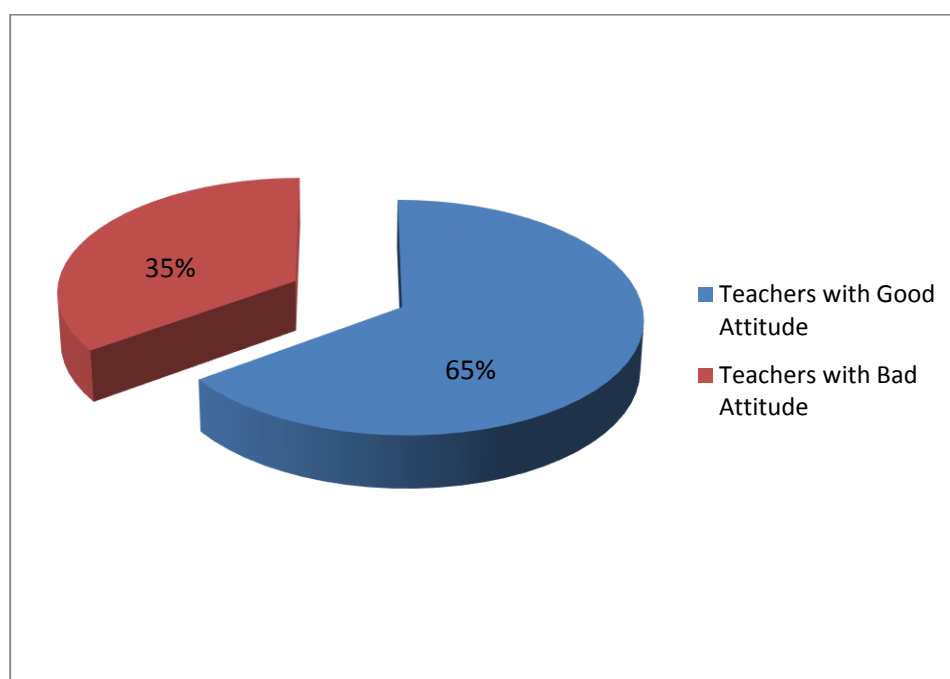
Table 4.4. The qualification of head teachers and grade seven teachers



The information in table 4.4.shows the qualification of grade seven teachers and head teachers in the sampled schools. Seventy percent (70%) of teachers had primary teacher certificates, thirty percent (30%) had primary teacher diplomas and zero percent (0%) of grade seven teachers had degrees. Among the head teachers, forty two percent (42%) had primary teacher certificate, twenty nine percent (29%) had diplomas and twenty nine percent (29%) pointed out that they had degrees.

4.7.The attitude of teachers towards teaching and the academic performance of learners

Table 4.5. The attitude of teachers towards teaching



The interviews with the teachers, head teachers and focus group discussion with the pupils, revealed the attitude of teachers towards teaching. It was revealed that sixty five percent (65%) of the teachers had a good attitude towards teaching. Thirty five percent (35%) of the teachers had a bad attitude towards teaching or work.

Additionally, one head teacher at School F reported the following on the attitude of teachers:

you know, teachers are also human beings, some are lazy while others are very committed with work. One good part of my teachers at this school is that a good number of them have a good attitude towards teaching.

Almost all the teachers responded that they had a good attitude towards teaching. For example when this teacher at school B was asked about her attitude and that of other teachers towards work, she responded:

My attitude is very good, I like pupils and teaching very much, I make sure that I prepare all the lesson plans and I always come for work on time.

During a focus group discussion at school A one of the three participants stated the following concerning the attitude of teachers towards work:

Our teacher comes late from break and we start lessons late most of the time.

4.8. The effective teachers' supervision, quality curriculum implementation and the academic performance of learners

Forty one percent (41%) of the teachers were marking pupils and checking their academic progress on a regular basis. While fifty nine percent (59%) of the teachers were not marking and checking the academic progress of the learners on a regular basis pupils progress on regular basis.

It was pointed out that forty six percent (46%) of head teachers do monitoring and fifty four (54%) of head teachers did not do monitoring.

In terms of visits by District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), thirty percent (30%) of respondents said they were visited by the DEBS office for monitoring. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents stated that they were not visited by the Standard Officers from DEBS.

Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents pointed out that they were visited by Provincial Education Officers. While seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents said their schools were not visited by the Provincial Education Officers.

Additionally, one of the head teachers of School D responded as follows:

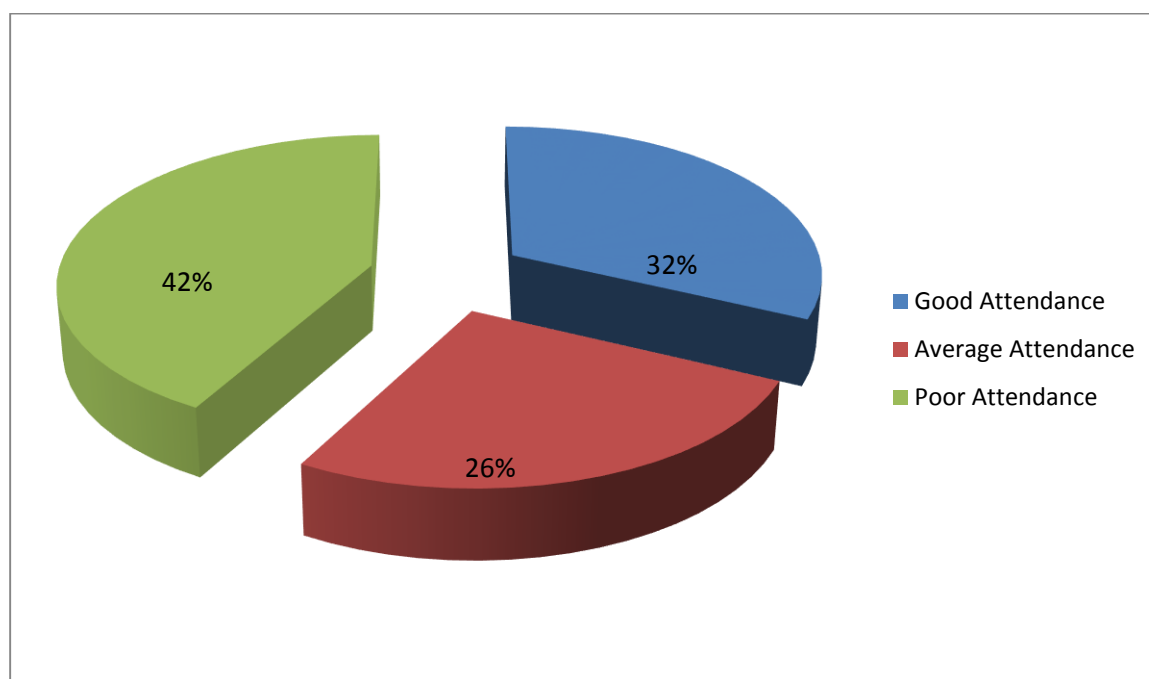
Since we started the term our school has never been visited by the District Education Secretary (DEBS) or the Provincial Education Officer (PEO).

4.9.0. Pupil related factors and the academic performance of learners

The objective on this theme was to determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District. The factors that will be looked at are: Absenteeism, social economic status and parents' level of education, distance from school and Pupils' attitude towards learning. To achieve this objective, the research question was what pupil related factors cause low academic performance in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District?

4.9.1. Absenteeism from School and academic performance of learners

Table 4.5.1. School attendance



On the attendance of pupils, thirty two percent (32%) of the respondents said that the attendance was good. Twenty six percent (26%) percent of the respondents pointed out that the attendance was average, while forty two percent (42%) of the respondents said that the attendance was poor.

Still on the attendance of learners, one of the head teachers of school G had this to say:

The attendance of our learners is not encouraging more especially during the period of caterpillar collection when most of our learners abandon school to join their parents and guardian in collecting caterpillars.

Another head teacher of School F pointed out that:

The attendance is seasonal in the first term when there are rains it fluctuates so much, instead of each class having seventy (70) pupils, you may have fifty (50) pupils or less than that. We just need to be encouraging them. In May it improves, in third term the attendance becomes very good.

A grade seven teacher at school B had to say the following concerning attendance:

So for them to be walking long distances every day it becomes a problem you find that today he comes or two three days then the fourth day he/she will be absent himself because of the long distance to school.

4.9.2. Social economic status, parents level of education and academic performance of learners

Thirty three percent (33%) of grade seven (7) pupils said they had attained education beyond grade seven (7). While sixty seven percent (67%) of grade seven (7) pupils pointed out that their parents or guardians had attained education below grade seven (7).

One of the pupils at school C said the following with regards to his parents level of education:

Both of my parents, father and mother completed grade twelve. My mother is a nurse and my father is a teacher and they both help me a lot in answering my home work. Every day they ask me about what we learnt at school and every morning before going to school they ensure that I have taken my breakfast or that I have carried some food to eat at break time at school it in my food warmer to eat at break time.

Another grade seven pupil at school F responded in a similar way as follows:

Both of my parents are primary school teachers. My mother helps me very much in doing home work and she is always concerned to know my daily academic performance. She makes sure that I attend school without fail.

Another grade seven pupil at school E echoed the following words:

My mother has never gone to school, while my father dropped out of school in grade three (3). They do not help me with home work because they cannot tackle the grade seven (7) work, because the father who is the most educated went as far as grade seven.

4.9.3. Distance from school and the academic performance of learners

Forty six percent (46%) of the respondents pointed that pupils were covering short distances. While fifty four percent (54%) responded that pupils were covering long distances to school.

On the same one of the grade seven pupils at school C pointed out that:

We cover fourteen kilometers (14km) per day that is seven kilometers when coming and seven kilometers when going. This has made many girls to drop out of school and to have poor academic performance as we reach school tired and hungry.

Another grade seven teacher at school B

Said the following on the distance: Yes I have a lot of pupils who come from very far places and distance affect them very much in that when these pupils reach school very tired and sometimes they even dose in class more especially the young ones. So distance is one the factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils at this school.

The head teacher of school F had this to say on the same:

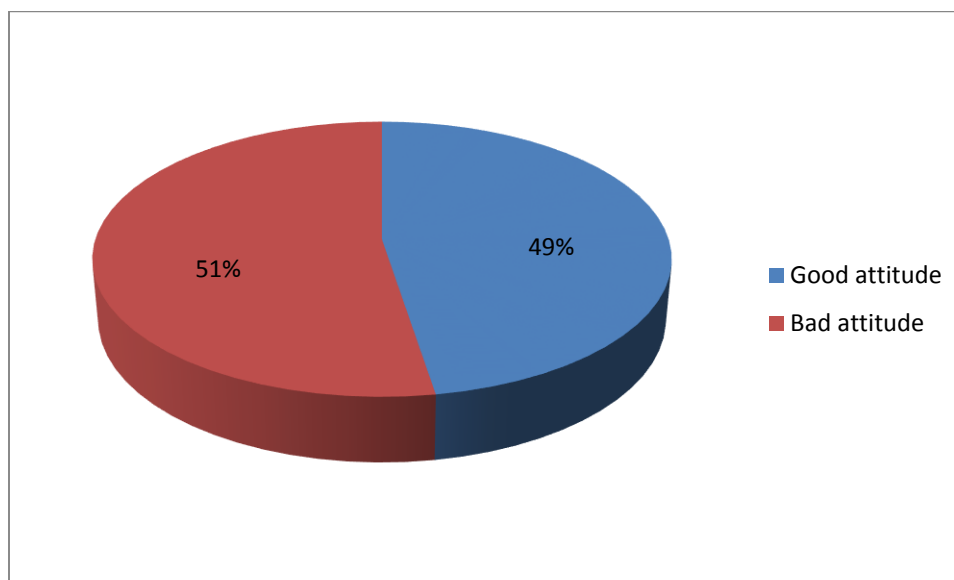
Yes I have pupils who come from very far places. In my own opinion if a child has covered seven kilometers without even breakfast he has just come to school and the school cannot provide them with food because of scarce resources, that child cannot concentrate on what the teacher is teaching. Instead the child will just be thinking of how he is going to cover that seven kilometers (7km) back home.

Another grade seven teacher at school C had this to say on the distance covered by learners:

Almost half of the class comes from very faraway places, they reach school very late and tired. Therefore, they do not concentrate much in the class.

4.9.4. Pupils attitude towards learning and their academic performance

Table 4.5.2. Pupils' attitude towards learning



It is clearly shown on the table that forty nine percent (49%) of respondents pointed out that the attitude of pupils was good. While fifty one percent (51%) of respondents pointed out that pupils had bad attitude towards learning.

On the same issue above, one of the head teachers at school A had this to say:

The attitude of pupils towards learning is very good and they are very much willing to learn except for the hindrances such as lack of teaching and learning aids and the issue of covering long distances to school.

Another head teacher at school D on the attitude of pupils towards learning pointed out that:

I cannot say all the pupils have good attitude towards learning that will be a lie. Let me just say some pupils have good attitude while others do not. So our responsibility as teachers and school

administrators is to be encouraging those pupils with negative attitude towards learning to change for the better.

In line with the aforementioned, a grade seven teacher had to say the following:

Being a rural school, a good number of pupils travel long distances, they come to school hungry and tired. Moreover, a good number of their parents or guardian have poor educational attainment, these have made most learners to have a negative attitude towards learning.

Also a grade seven pupil pointed out the following on the issue at hand:

We are very much willing to learn, but the problem is with our teacher, he comes late most of the time, sometimes he comes to teach when he is drunk and does not even come on a regular basis. This has discouraged us very much and made many of us to stop coming to school.

4.10.Summary

In summary, the data had been presented in line with the research objectives. The first research objectives was on the school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of learners at grade seven final examinations(see page 30) where the factors had been explained in details. Furthermore, data for pupil related factors were also presented (see page 39) for detailed presentation. The next chapter will discuss the findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE (5)

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0. Overview

This chapter discusses the research findings as guided by the objectives of the study stated in chapter one of this dissertation. Discussions of the findings are presented with reference to the specific objectives of the study in the following order: To assess the school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District, to determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District and to establish strategies on how pupil performance in grade seven final examinations can be improved in Mungwi District. The chapter will close with a summary.

5.1. Adequacy of physical facilities, management and the academic performance of learners

Crawford (1996) says that materials may provide the major sources of information apart from the teacher. The type of teaching and learning materials can have a bearing on the results of the pupils, hence the probe in the type of materials used in the teaching of sufficient quality and quantity resources and facilities determine how effectively the process of teaching and learning takes place. Fuller (1986) found that instructional materials such as textbooks, visual and audio materials not only enhance communication among teachers and learners, but also facilitate child centered learning through discovery.

There was evidence that most of the schools did not have enough physical teaching and learning facilities or aids. Desks were not adequate; the schools did not have enough of them. In most schools three (3) to four (4) grade seven pupils were sharing one desk instead of it being shared by two learners.

After analyzing the data got in response to the question regarding the availability of text books, it came out clearly in most of the schools that there was a critical shortage of grade seven (7) text books. Just as it was pointed out at School A on the availability of text book, a grade seven (7) teacher said the following:

It is difficult to teach when you do not have enough text books, like in my case I have three (3) text books for social studies against seventy pupils. This becomes very difficult for me to deliver

quality lessons. So it should be the responsibility of the school administration to see to it that the school is provided with teaching and learning aids.

On the class room accommodation, a good number of schools had no classroom space as most of the schools were over enrolled. The schools were acting against the Patriotic Front policy of having forty five pupils per class.

In answering the same question of adequacy of physical teaching and learning facilities or materials, it was discovered during interviews and focus group discussion that pupils did not have the required exercise books. Most of them had been using one exercise book for more than one subject. This agrees with Kombo (1988) who says, Schools with adequate facilities such as text books and other instructional materials stand a better chance of having better results than poorly equipped ones.

On the issue of wall charts, it was revealed that most of the schools did not have them. Very few schools had the wall charts in good place. Ayoo (2002) agrees that good school environment such as; classrooms, desks and books have a direct impact on good performance among the students in developing countries. Classrooms are a place that pupils spend the greatest part of their day.

In a similar study Eshiwani et al (1988) observed that most of the schools, whose students performed poorly, spent less money on the purchase of teaching and learning resources. Lack of adequate textbooks and teaching materials makes teaching difficulties as students are unable to do their oral or written work during class lesson. With the availability of text books pupils will be able to read on their own while at home and do their homework. This is in agreement with MOE (1996) states that quality educational provision requires the supply of books, writing materials and educational items in sufficient quality to meet the needs of all students. Also Kombo (1988) affirmed that availability and the use of teaching and learning resources in schools are among the factors which may explain why poor performance in examinations is a characteristic of Primary schools of Mungwi District.

5.2. Class size and academic performance of learners

The influence of the class size has a great impact on the teaching-learning process which in turn affects the academic performance. The smaller the class size, the easier it is for the teacher-

learner interaction, consequently improving the academic performance since the teacher will be able to give the learner individual attention (Smith, 2013).

The study further wanted to find out the effects of the class size on the academic performance. It was clear that most of the schools had over crowded grade seven class rooms. This has made teaching and learning to be very difficult. In order for the effective teaching to be realized the number of pupils in class should be manageable. Just as one of the head teachers had put it:

There are one hundred and forty (140) grade seven pupils of which grade seven A and B had seventy (70) pupils each instead of forty (40) to forty five (45) pupils according to the government policy. Therefore, there could not be effective teaching and learning, because teachers cannot do individualized teaching.

In addition, Mege (2014) agrees that overcrowding in classrooms make it difficult for pupils to write, the teacher is also unable to move around the class to assist needy pupils and this affects the teaching-learning process, which in the end affects academic performance. Crowded classroom conditions not only make it difficult for learners to concentrate but inevitably limit the amount of time teachers can spend on innovative teaching methods such as cooperative learning and group work. Large class size impacts negatively to the teaching-learning process since the teacher is not even able to move freely to assess the pupils work as they do their exercises.

5.3. The qualifications of teachers and the academic performance of learners

Seventy percent (70%) of teachers had primary teacher certificates, thirty percent (30%) had primary teacher diplomas and zero percent (0%) of grade seven teachers had degrees. Among the head teachers, forty two percent (42%) had primary teacher certificate, twenty nine percent (29%) had diplomas and twenty nine percent (29%) pointed out that they had degrees.

The above information implies that all the teachers who were handling the grade seven pupils were qualified to teach the grade sevens. Because according to current education policy, MOE (1996) supports that the minimum qualification for a primary school teacher is a certificate. This means that the poor academic performance of grade seven pupils in final examinations in Mugwi District may have been caused by other factors rather than the qualification of teachers.

This is in agreement with Etsey (2005) who says, teacher qualification has been consistently found to impact on the academic performance of pupils. A teacher who lacks the professional skill will be unable to deliver in class, which will induce poor student's performance. A teacher who does not have both the academic and the professional qualifications would undoubtedly have a negative influence on the teaching and learning of a given subject.

5.4. The attitude of teachers towards teaching and the academic performance of learners

From the interviews with the teachers, head teachers and focus group discussion with the pupil, the study revealed that most of the teachers had good attitude towards teaching. In conformity, one of the grade seven teachers said the following on the attitude of teachers:

My attitude is very good, I like pupils and teaching very much, I make sure that I prepare all the lesson plans and I always come for work on time.

This agrees with Smith (2013) who says the effect of such efforts is that the students will benefit from effective teaching which has the likelihood of making them improve their academic performance. Similarly, another study by Kerr (2011) revealed that lack of drive and professional commitment produces poor attendance and unprofessional attitudes towards students, which, in turn, affects pupils' performance academically. This kind of unprofessional attitudes may lead to loss of many instructional hours which cannot be regained. This agrees again with Kerr (2011) in his study that revealed that lack of drive and professional commitment produces poor attendance and unacceptable attitudes towards pupils, which, in turn, affects their performance academically. This kind of unprofessional attitudes may lead to loss of many instructional hours which cannot be regained.

5.5. The effective teachers' supervision, quality curriculum implementation and the academic performance of learners

The quality assurance and standard is responsible for the control of the quality of education at all levels throughout the country. This is achieved through inspection, guidance and advice to all schools in the country. Such inspection includes visits to institutions for checking on facilities, equipments, administration and actual teaching by individual member of staff. During such

visits, quality assurance and standard officers may give advice to both head teacher and staff on such matter necessary to improve the quality of instruction in the school (Smith, 2012).

In answering the question on how effective teachers' supervision and quality curriculum implementation and the academic performance, the research established that, most of the teachers and school administrators were not supervising and monitoring learning process. A good number of teachers were not marking pupils and checking their progress on regular basis. On the head teachers and other senior education officers, the study established that most of the head teachers and Education Standard Officers (ESOs) were not doing internal and external monitoring.

In affirming to the above revelations, one of the head teachers responded:

Since we started the term our school has never been visited by the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) or the Provincial Education Officer (PEO).

MOE (1996) supports that Standard Officers play a very cardinal role in ensuring that the supervision of educational programmes and resources are carried out efficiently. Among such personnel are the district and provincial standard officers. The concern of such personnel would be to make sure that educational administrators perform their roles as expected and that instructional practice is conducted within the reasonable bound of set objective.

Matomombo (2003) adds that Inspection and supervision must be carried out periodically so that the standards of education are regularly assessed and controlled. With little inspection, schools are likely to continue performing poorly. In other words poor supervision leads to poor academic performance of pupils since teachers may relax in the performance of their responsibilities.

5.6.0. Pupil related factors and the academic performance of learners

The objective on this theme was to determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District. These factors were absenteeism from School, social economic status and parents level of education, Distance from school and Pupils' attitude towards learning.

5.6.1. Absenteeism from school and the academic performance of learners

Most studies and literature indicates that learner absenteeism was the beginning of a serious challenge in education. For example, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) observed that many children who are normally enrolled in school do not attend class on a regular basis. Other scholars like Bennett (2010) in Examination Council of Zambia (2013) have actually stated that although there have been concerted efforts among various stakeholders to reduce absenteeism in schools; challenges still exist as many learners continue to absent themselves from classes. Wadesango and Machingombi (2011) equally acknowledged absenteeism as a serious problem in Africa, particularly among South African students.

This study revealed that thirty two percent (32%) of respondents said that the attendance was good. Twenty six (23%) percent of respondents pointed out that the attendance was average, while forty two (42%) of respondents said that the attendance was poor. In short it was clear that the attendance was not good in most of the schools. Because when it is average, this simply means that it needs much to be desired. Just as it was pointed out by one of the head teachers that:

The attendance of our learners is not encouraging more especially during the period of caterpillar collection when most of our learners abandoned school to join their parents and guardian in collecting caterpillars.

So absenteeism from school by pupils may be one of the factors that contribute to low academic performance. Davis (1989) agrees that absenteeism causes low self-concept of academic ability leading to poor attainment in school.

Also MOE (2014) agrees that absenteeism rates at primary and junior secondary school continue to pose challenges in the attainment of quality education in Zambia despite the introduction of Free Primary Education. A trend analysis of examination candidature revealed that absenteeism was on the rise.

5.6.2. Social economic status, parents' level of education and academic performance of learners

There was evidence that the thirty three percent (33%) of grade seven (7) pupils, responded that their parents had attained education above grade seven (7) and that they have been helping them

in doing home work. It was also pointed out that educated parents or guardian encourage their children to go school and have time to go through their activity books.

One of the pupils at school C adds by saying the following with regard to the level of education for his parents:

Both of my parents, father and mother completed grade twelve. My mother is a nurse and my father is a teacher and they both help me a lot in the answering of home work. They every day ask me about what we learnt at school and every morning before going to school they make sure that I have taken my breakfast or take it in my food warmer to eat at school during break time.

Another grade seven pupil at school F further agrees in a similar way as follows:

Both of my parents are primary school teachers. My mother helps me very much in doing home work and she is always concerns to know my daily academic performance. She makes sure that I attend school without fail.

While sixty seven percent (67%) of grade seven pupils pointed out that their parents or guardian had attained education below grade seven (7). The study revealed that these parents or guardian of low educational attainment, were not caring and helping their children. Majority of these parents were not bothering whether their children had gone to school or not.

In support of the above, another grade seven pupil at school E pointed out the following:

My mother has never gone to school, while my father dropped out of school in grade three (3). They do not help me with home work because they cannot tackle the grade seven (7) work, the father who is the most educated went as far as grade seven.

Parents' level of education influences pupils' performance in the sense that educated parents value education and they encourage their own children to value education and to actively engage themselves in studies. In a study conducted in Kenya by Ezewu and Obanya (1988) it was found that the higher the levels of education of parents, the more likely it motivates children to learn and perform better. Kundu and Tuto (2000) found that home background has a significant influence on the achievement of children at school because educated parents tend to offer more psychological, social and financial support to their children, thus giving them the opportunity to excel in their studies.

The study concludes that learners from poor families and those from households engaged in agriculture or livestock-raising were more likely to have poor academic performance at school. Jeynes (2002) agrees that Social economic status is most commonly determined by combining parents' education level, occupation status and income level. In most of the studies on academic performance of students, it is not surprising that social economic status is one of the major factors studied while predicting academic performance. It is believed that low social economic status negatively affects academic achievement because low social economic status prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home.

Poor families have lower aspirations for their children than upper class due to the opportunity cost of the child. According to Todaro (1977) adds that children from good social economic background tend to perform better in schools as result of good parent education standards, high income, and proximity to urban areas where the best schools are found.

5.6.3. Distance from School and the academic performance of learners

This study revealed most of the learners were covering long distance to and from school. Just as one of the head teachers had this to say:

Yes I have pupils who come from very far places. In my own opinion if a child has covered seven kilometers without even breakfast he has just come to school and the school cannot provide them with food because of scarce resources, the child cannot concentrate on what the teacher is teaching. Instead the child will just be thinking of how he is going to cover seven kilometers (7km) back home.

On the same question of how distance affects performance of the learners a grade seven teacher agreed to say:

Yes I have a lot of pupils who come from very far places and distance affect them very much in that when these pupils reach school very tired and sometimes they even dose in class more especially the young ones. So distance is one the factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils at this school.

Various studies have been done to determine causes of poor performance in primary schools. In agreement Etsey (2005) carried out a survey amongst primary schools to identify causes of poor

performance in primary schools in although not in Zambia but in Ghana. The study revealed that factors responsible for poor performance included distance from the school for the pupils. Pupils who spend a lot of time on their way to and from school tend to lag behind in academic achievement. Their study habit and time set aside for doing assignment is interfered with seriously which in return affect examination performance.

5.6.4. Pupils attitude towards learning and their academic performance

Attitude is an important aspect in learning and it can either hinder or enhance the learning. Therefore a pupil who is highly motivated to learn and sees its usefulness can make better progress than one who has a lower degree of aspirations, interest and motivation. When pupils are motivated, they can appreciate the value of education and the chances to perform are too high (KESSP, 2006) in (Garuiya, 2013).

This study clearly shown that forty nine percent t (49%) of respondents pointed out that the attitude of pupils was good. While fifty one percent (51%) of respondents pointed that pupils had bad attitude towards learning. This revealed that the percentage of pupils with bad attitude is more than those pupils with good attitude. One of the head teachers at school A had this to say:

I cannot say all the pupils have good attitude towards learning, which will be a lie. Let me just say some pupils have good attitude while others are not. So our responsibility as teachers and school administrators is to be encouraging those pupils with negative attitude towards learning to change for the better.

On the same a grade seven teacher had to say the following:

Being a rural school, a good number of pupils travel long distances, they come to school hungry and tired. Moreover, a good number of their parents or guardian have low educational attainment, these have made most learners to have negative attitude towards learning.

Also a grade seven pupil pointed out the following on the same:

We are very much willing to learn, but the problem is with our teacher, he comes late most of the time, sometime he comes to teach when he is drunk and does not even come on regular basis. This has discouraged us very much and made many pupils stop coming to school.

The current study explores the ways in which the attitudes of learners affect learning and their influence on academic performances. This is because learner influence to a large extent, the effectiveness learning process and all this depends on their attitudes towards their work. Mwale (2001) carried out a survey in Malawi on school learners' attitudes towards the teaching and learning in primary schools. The purpose of the study was to examine the learners' attitudes towards learning and their effect on performance. The study found out that majority of the learners disagreed that they hated learning. The learners had a strong desire to learn. However, teachers frustrated them by embarrassing them.

5.7.Summary

The chapter looked at the discussion of finding in line with the research objective. The first research objectives based on the school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of learners at grade seven final examinations(see page 44) where the discussion had been explained in details. In addition, discussion for pupil related factors were also presented (see page 48) for detailed presentation. The next chapter will be based on the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX (6)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0.Overview

This chapter concludes and gives recommendations of the study based on the findings of the study. The study was conducted to establish the factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of learners in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District. The conclusions will be made in line with the research objectives and theoretical framework as presented in chapter one (1). Study recommendations and suggestions for future research will be provided. Lastly, the chapter will end with a summary.

6.1. Conclusions of the study

From the findings of the study presented in chapter five, several conclusions were arrived at based on the research objectives and reflective research questions. On the first objective, that was ‘to assess the school based factors that have contributed to poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District,’ it was clear that the Primary schools in Mungwi were not provided with physical teaching and learning aids such as desks, class room accommodations, stationary and exercise books for the learners. The study also revealed that the government of the republic of Zambia was not adequately funding the primary schools in Mungwi or it was not providing teaching and learning aids according to needs of the schools in Mungwi District.

On the class size and academic performance, the class size was found to influence the teaching and learning process, very much as small classes were mostly preferred by most teachers and even pupils. This helps teachers to have enough time to spend on individualized teaching or have time to spend on individual learners.

The study also establish that all teachers that were teaching the grade seven classes were qualified to teach at a primary school. The qualification of teachers varied from the certificates to the degrees. Going by the finding of this research it was very evident that teachers had good attitude towards teaching.

On the effective teachers’ supervision and quality curriculum implementation and the academic performance, it was established that there was no proper supervision of teachers by both internal and external monitors. This means that the head teachers were not effectively monitoring their

teachers. This is just the same with standard officers from District Education Board Secretary office (DEBS) and the Provincial Education office (PEO), they were not monitoring the schools on regular basis. The school administrators and standard officers are responsible for the control of the quality of education at all levels throughout the country.

As regard to the second objective, which was ‘to determine pupil related factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in grade Seven (7) final examinations in Mungwi District,’ it was revealed that the rate of absenteeism was high in primary schools in Mungwi District. The Examination Council of Zambia (2013) adds, although there have been concerted efforts among various stakeholders to reduce absenteeism in schools; challenges still exist as many learners continue to absent themselves from classes.

On the Social economic status and parents’ level of education, it was evidenced that most of the parents or guardians had low educational attainments. In addition, these parents were not helping and encouraging their children to learn. On the other hands Parents’ level of education influences pupils’ performance in the sense that educated parents value education and they tend to encourage their own children to value and actively engage in receiving education. Because educated parents tend to offer more psychological, social and financial support to their children, thus giving them the opportunity to excel in their studies. The study concludes that learners from poor families were more likely to have poor academic performance at school. Jeynes (2002) agrees that Social economic status is most commonly determined by combining parents’ education level, occupation status and income level.

On the distance from School and the academic performance, this study revealed most of the learners were covering long distances to and from school. Pupils were coming from very far places. Some pupils were covering as long as fourteen kilometers (14km) to and from. Most parents were not providing their children with breakfast before going to school. These children were not even concentrating on what the teachers were teaching.

Attitude is an important aspect in learning and it can either hinder or enhance the learning. Therefore a pupil who is highly motivated to learn and sees its usefulness can make better progress than one who has a lower degree of aspirations, interest and motivation (Garuiya, 2013).

This study clearly shows that a good number of pupils had bad attitude towards learning. This attitude of learners was negatively affecting learning, hence negative influence on academic performances. This is because learner influence to a large extent, the effectiveness learning process and all this depends on their attitudes towards their work.

6.2. Recommendations of the study

Arising from the above findings and discussions that addressed all the objectives, this study makes the following recommendations:

- The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education should be providing schools with adequate funding for teaching and learning facilities or provide schools with the required teaching and learning aid to all the government schools in Mungwi District.
- The school community partnership should be encouraged to support the development of schools to improve the facilities and ensure that the schools have enough instructional materials for effective teaching and learning and consequently improve performance.
- The school administrators are to make sure that Classes should also be made manageable by adding more streams in schools where the classes are large or overcrowded.
- The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education should continue recruiting qualified teachers on the regular basis.
- The Government and the schools should be finding ways and means of motivating teachers. Because drive is a critical factor that influences a teacher's work attitude and that a highly motivated person puts in the greatest effort into his or her job.
- Internal and external monitoring and supervision must be carried out periodically so that the standards of education are regularly assessed and controlled. The monitoring and supervision reports are meaningless unless they are followed by action.
- The Government of the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of General Education should construct a primary school within the radius of four kilometers (4km) so that

absenteeism as the result of covering long distances to school can be reduced for the learners to have good attitude towards learning.

6.3. Suggestions for future research

This study was centered on the factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in Grade Seven Final Examinations in Mungwi District. Whilst revealing the various factors that have contributed to the poor academic performance of learners, the following gaps were noticed and are therefore some of the issues for future research:

- Further studies on the influence of school based and pupil related factors should be done to cover urban primary schools in order to have a comparative data in this area of study.
- Teachers' motivation and how this influences learners' academic performance or attainments can also be carried out.

6.4. Summary.

Conclusions and recommendations of the study had been done according to the research findings. The chapter was closed with the suggestions for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i

Semi structured interview guide for focus group discussion for grade seven pupils

The purpose of this semi structured interview guide is to gather information about your own perception of the factors that have contributed on the low academic performance of learners at grade seven(7) Final Examination in your school. The information will be kept with total confidentiality and is only intends for this research.

1. How is your experience at this school?.....

.....

2. How Adequacy are the teaching and learning resources in your school?.....

.....

3.How many are you in your class? How does the class size affect the academic performance?

.....

.....

4. What is the highest academic qualification of your parents or guardian ?.....

.....

5. How is the attitude of teachers towards teaching?.....

.....

6.How effective is your teacher in class supervision?.....

.....

7.How effective is your head teacher in school supervision?.....

.....

8.How is your daily school attendance ?.....

.....

9.what is the distance between school and your home? How does the distance affect your academic performance?.....

.....

10.How is the attitude of other pupils towards learning?.....

.....

Appendix ii

Semi structured interview guide for grade seven class teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about your own perception of the factors that have contributed on the low academic performance of learners at Grade Seven(7) Final Examinations in your school. The information will be kept with total confidentiality and is only intends for this research.

1.What is your professional qualification?.....

.....

2.How is your teaching experience?.....

.....

3. How Adequacy are the teaching and learning resources in your school?.....

.....

4. What is your Class size? How does your class size affects performance of your pupils?.....

.....

5.How is the attitude of other teachers towards teaching?.....

.....

6.How effective is the teacher supervision and quality curriculum implementation?.....

.....

7.What style of leadership do you mostly practice in class? And why do you prefer that style?.....

.....

8.In your own opinion, what factors have led to the poor performance of learners at your school?.....

.....

9.How is the daily attendance of your pupils?.....

.....

10. Are there pupils who come from very far?..... If yes, how does distance affect their performance?.....

.....

Appendix iii

Semi structured interviews guide for the head teacher

The purpose of this semi structured interview guide is to gather information about your own perception of the factors that have contributed on the low academic performance of learners at Grade Seven(7) Final Examinations in your school. The information will be kept with total confidentiality and is only intends for this research.

1.What is your professional qualification?.....

.....

2.How is your professional experience?.....

.....

3. How Adequacy are the Teaching and Learning Resources?.....

.....

4.what is the size of the grade seven class in your school? How does the size affect the performance of the learners?.....

.....

5.What is the attitude of teachers towards teaching?.....

.....

6.How effective is teacher supervision and quality curriculum implementation in your school?

.....

.....

7.Is there low performance of pupils at your school?.....if the answer is yes, In your own opinion, what factors have led to the poor performance of learners at your school?.....

.....

8.How is the daily attendance of your grade seven pupils?.....

.....

9.Are there pupils who come from very far?..... If the answer is yes, how does distance affect their performance?.....

.....

10.How is the attitude of pupils towards learning?.....

.....

Appendix iv

Letter Requesting Assent of Grade seven (7) Learners Less than 18 years to participate in the study

Note: This letter was used to request assent from all grade seven learners aged less than 18 years to participate in a focus group discussion or interview. Only the names of the learners were changing on the letter.

Title of study: *An investigation of the causes of poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in selected primary schools of Mungwi District*

Dear

I am doing a study on ‘An investigation of the causes of poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in selected primary schools of Mungwi District’ as part of my studies at the University of Zambia. Your head teacher has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your Provincial Education Officer (PEO), District Education Officer (DEBS), head teacher, teachers, parents as well as you can use to improve the poor performance at grade seven (7) final examinations. This will help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

Together with twenty (20) other grade seven (7) learners, I would like you to form part of a group of seven (7) grade seven learners. Your group involvement in the research will be through a thirty five (35) minutes will be required to answer the researcher’s questions relating to the title of the research indicated above. Your responses or answers to the researcher’s questions will

only be known by the researcher and will not be shared with your head teacher, teachers, parents or anybody else.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. You do not have to be part of this study if you do not want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticize you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at: +26 0977177067. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: MUKANU STEPHEN. **Cell number:** +26 0977177067.

Do not sign written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

Appendix v

‘Written Assent’ For Grade seven (7) Learners less than 18 years

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

Learner's name:.....Learner's signature:.....Date:.....

Witness's name:.....Witness's signature:.....Date:.....

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

Parent/guardian's name:.....Parent/guardian's signature:.....Date:.....

Researcher's name:.....Researcher's signature:.....Date:.....

Appendix vi

Consent form

Dear Participant,

My name is MUKANU STEPHEN. I am a student at the University of Zambia pursuing Masters of Education in Educational Management. This is a collaborative Post Graduate Programme between the University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University. You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: An investigation of the causes of poor academic performance of pupils in grade seven (7) final examinations in selected primary schools of Mungwi District of Zambia. The following study interview will be recorded and developed to ask you a few questions regarding the poor academic performance of learners in grade seven (7) final examinations of Mungwi District of Zambia. It is my hope that this information can contribute to the little existing literature on poor academic performance of learners, thereby helping in policy formulation. There are no identified risks from participating in this research. The information you will provide during the interview is highly confidential. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate without consequences. The interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete. You will receive no compensation for participating in the research study. Responses to the study will only be reported in aggregated form to protect the identity of respondents. The results will be presented at the University of Zambia Post Graduate seminar presentations. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact the researcher at mukanusteve@gmail.com or 0977177067.

If you would like to know the results of this research you can visit the University of Zambia Library Special Collection, Thesis and Dissertation section. Thank you for your consideration. Your signature below indicates that you have read the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Signature..... Date.....