

**THE IMPACT OF THE NEW PRIMARY READING PROGRAMME ON THE POOR
READERS.**

by

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THESIS
M.ED.
KAL
2005
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**A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Special Education**

**The University of Zambia
December, 2005**



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I dedicate this whole work to my parents and family for without you life would be incomplete and quite sour. My family always saw potential in me and encouraged me to go on even when life was discouraging.

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DEDICATION

It is said that “you can choose friends but not family” and so whatever families we have are our best gifts and we must embrace and appreciate them.

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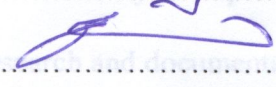
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APPROVAL

This dissertation of Sylvia Chanda Kalindi is approved as fulfilling part of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Education in Special Education by the University of Zambia.

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I am also grateful to the staff at the Italian School of Lusaka particularly Mrs Patricia Gilardi, for the support rendered and generally for having 'open doors'. I would also like to thank Mr Geoffrey Tambulukani, University of Zambia, and Ms Nancy Mwape, Zambia Daily Mail, for the literature they availed to me on this topic.

I am also grateful to my friends in the university and outside (especially Dr Sally Trollip) for all their encouragement and support. I thank my entire family for being supportive materially and spiritually.

Above all, I thank the Almighty God for paving the way for me to do this study programme and for bringing me this far. I can never really adequately thank my God for his goodness. Anyhow, everyday that I live I shall give my life to God in appreciation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted in many ways to several individuals and institutions for the support rendered to me while undertaking this study. I would like to extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr S. W. Mbewe Kunkhuli, for his guidance, patience and support without which this study would not have been a success.

I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, Dr Kurt Muller a visiting professor from Finland, for availing his research and documentation, and generally for giving advice on the topic.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective for carrying out this study was to find out if the poor readers were benefiting from the 'new child centred' approach to learning to read under the Primary Reading Programme. The specific objectives were to find out if the poor readers had acquired the initial literacy skills and how well they were developing literacy skills in English; teachers were oriented towards helping poor readers acquire literacy skills; classrooms had adequate reading material to support reading development as well as to whether the poor readers utilised the reading material. In this study, 'poor reader' referred to a pupil who had not made satisfactory progress in reading given instruction in the traditional general education classroom.

A sample size of 60 pupils (31 males and 29 females) from six selected basic schools in Kasama and Mpika districts were used in this study namely; Chifwani, Mubanga Chipoya, Kasenda, Chibansa, Njanji and Kabale respectively.

The measures of reading included single word reading and reading comprehension tasks both in Ibibemba and English. An additional measure of phoneme awareness was done. In addition to this a brief interview to ascertain reading behaviour was conducted with pupils individually. To obtain information from the teachers interviews were used. Frequencies, percentages and t-test were used to analyse the quantitative data obtained. Responses from interviews were coded and grouped to establish the emerging themes in the study.

The study found that the poor readers had not acquired adequate initial literacy skills to enable them read words, the teachers were not oriented towards helping poor readers in their classes, but the classrooms had enough reading material though the poor readers could not adequately utilise the reading material due to their inability to read.

The study recommended the following to the Ministry of Education in order to realise the goal that every pupil succeeds in learning to read and write clearly, correctly and confidently in a Zambian language and in English:

- Adequate training of teachers: The Ministry of Education should ensure that New Breakthrough to Literacy teachers are provided with long training up to university level in order to acquaint them with skills on how to teach slow learners such as poor readers. This will also help teachers to acquire diagnostic skills necessary in assessment as well as useful guidelines on the prevention and correction of the difficulties they experience when teaching slow learners.
- Early childhood education should be introduced as soon as possible in all schools countrywide in order to help provide a good basis for the children to acquire reading skills in grade one and enjoy the benefits of accelerated learning thereafter.
- The large class sizes should be reduced. This could be done through building more classrooms so that the present classes could be split in two thereby allowing for increased learning time for each class.
- Train and employ teacher aides for grades one to three. This will relieve the class teacher of some class management responsibilities and allow him/her to concentrate more on meeting the different needs of the pupils.

- Class teachers should be availed teaching material that enables them to teach poor readers in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ACRONYMS

ADD-	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADEA-	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ADHD-	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
BASAT-	Basic Skills Assessment Tool
BESSIP-	Basic Education Sub-sector Investment Programme
BTL-	Breakthrough to Literacy
CDC-	Curriculum Development Centre
DEBS-	District Educational Boards Secretary
MoE-	Ministry of Education
NBTL-	New Breakthrough to Literacy
OECD-	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRP-	Primary Reading Programme
R.E-	Religious Education
SACMEQ-	Southern African Consortium of Education Quality
UNESCO-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ZATEC-	Zambia Teacher Education Course

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Government of the Republic of Zambia's concern over the appalling standards of reading levels among pupils in the lower and middle basic grades subsequently led to the introduction of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP). This is a seven-year programme conceived under the Zambia Ministry of Education's Basic Education Sub Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP). Its main purpose is to improve the quality of reading in English and in the seven Zambian languages currently used in education, for all Zambian girls and boys of eligible school age (Sampa, 2003). The PRP represents a new national literacy strategy for Zambia. At independence the use of local languages in early primary education was abandoned in favour of a 'straight for English' policy. Gradually literacy standards suffered as a result, until in 1996 when the Ministry of Education (MoE) revised its policy and stated the following:

Zambia has had almost 30 years experience of using English as the medium of instruction from grade 1 onwards. Children who have very little contact with English outside the school have been required to learn how to read and write through and in this language which is quite alien to them.... The experience has not been altogether satisfactory. The fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many Zambian children (MoE 1996: 39).

In light of this, the PRP has become the programme to spearhead implementation of this change in policy, and produce courses that enable children to learn in a familiar Zambian language. This programme has 3-pronged objectives to ensure that this purpose is met, that is, to ensure that: (a) children acquire basic literacy skills in a familiar language in grade 1 and have a basis in oral English language, (b) children transfer the literacy skills

into English which remains the main medium for education in grade 2 and, (c) that children develop and extend these vital literacy skills in grades 3 to 7 to give them access to the entire curriculum.

The Ministry of Education attaches high priority to the attainment of this goal. This is reflected in the policy document which stipulates that:

The aim of the curriculum for the lower and middle basic classes (Grades 1-7) is to enable pupils to read and write clearly, correctly and confidently in a Zambian language and in English (MoE 1996: 34).

In addition to this, inclusion (a wide concept with the intention of making effective the children's right to education, to equal opportunities and participation) has been given a great deal of support over the years, especially by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), reaching a key stage at a Salamanca meeting in Spain, where among other things it was advocated that children with special needs be educated in the ordinary schools (UNESCO, 1994).

Savolainen, Hokkala and Alasuutari (2000) further illustrate that actively involving all citizens including those with disabilities in society is a goal of social policy in the vast majority of countries. Reducing the level of unemployment and by association, the level of poverty has been a principal indicator of effective inclusion in society. Savolainen et al. (2000) further add that for pupils to be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by the knowledge economy there is need for as many pupils as possible to be literate and numerate.

However, learning to read presents a paradox in that it seems so natural to the literate adult yet for many children, especially the poor readers, learning to read is an extraordinary effortful task that may be a long and complicated process lasting several years. Poor readers fail miserably in the very same classrooms where most children succeed (Wong, 1998). Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky and Seidenberg (2001) point out how interesting the paradox is to the scientist because learning to read is strikingly different from other sorts of learning. Anyhow, the significance of the paradox is general in ways that touch everyone because literacy, as has been alluded to earlier, is an essential ingredient of success in societies like ours where so much information is conveyed by the written word.

1.1 Background to the study

The recurring evidence of the extremely low levels of literacy among pupils in the lower and middle basic levels from as early as the 1970's have prompted the government to introduce a number of reading programmes such as the Zambia Primary Course and the Zambia Basic Education Course (William, 1993). The latter was expected to encourage teachers and pupils to think of reading as a process of obtaining information and as an opportunity to be communicated with, rather than a process of parroting the book. The programmes however did not make much difference to the bleak picture seeing that the children who completed the lower and middle basic levels could not exhibit the expected fundamental reading, writing and numerical skills (MoE, 1996). The issue of poor reading levels had seen the concern of a number of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, parents and teachers for some time. According to Tambulukani (2002) the

concern arose from a number of 'danger signs', which had become evident in different sections of the Zambian society. The 'danger signs' included primary school children not reading at desirable levels, secondary school children not exhibiting adequate reading and writing skills, students in tertiary institutions like colleges and universities exhibiting reading and writing difficulties as well as a general decline in the reading culture of the country. In addition to this, other surveys such as the National Assessment revealed that the performance scores in English and mathematics were low in all parts of the country, for both sexes, and for those from all socio-economic strata in society (Kelly & Kanyika 2000). Tambulukani (2002) also states that the Southern African Consortium of Education Quality (SACMEQ) of 1995 revealed that 25% of the grade six pupils who were tested and able to read at minimum levels, only 3% were able to read at desirable levels, that is, able to read materials of their grade levels.

1.1.1 The Primary Reading Programme

In 1999, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched another programme, a major literacy programme called Primary Reading Programme (PRP). The general purpose of the programme was to improve the reading skills of all Zambian primary school children as a major contribution to the goal of children learning more effectively across the school curriculum. This was to enable the primary school leavers benefit from the educational, social, economic and democratic opportunities and rights to which literacy helps to give access (Kanyika, 2002). With the mandate to reverse the extremely low literacy rates recorded in Zambian schools, the programme adopted the Breakthrough To Literacy (BTL) strategy, which had proved successful in a number of African countries in the

Southern region. In Zambia, BTL was formally evaluated in 1999, after the completion of the Northern Province Pilot initiative and was again rated a shining success story (Higgins, Tambulukani and Chikalanga, 2000).

The PRP then had the task of designing a more sustainable Zambian 'friendly' version of the original BTL in the latter part of 1999. The revised edition came to be known as the New Breakthrough To Literacy (NBTL). With NBTL the programme then embarked on establishing reliable baseline data against which any future gains in literacy could be measured. This implied coming up with both the English and Zambian language literacy tests, which were administered in 1999 at the end of the school year (Higgins et al. 2000).

1.1.2 Assessing Literacy Standards

As in the original Icibemba evaluation, the same test (illustrated below) was administered to the top ten achievers (in literacy) in schools that had received interventions under the PRP in 2002.

The test conducted 3 sub-tests, that is:

Dictation: Two sentences were read to pupils a number of times and then pupils had to write down the sentences.

Picture Story Writing: A picture of a family scene was discussed and then without additional help, pupils were asked to write a minimum of 4 sentences in their first language describing aspects of the scene.

Comprehension : A short paragraph was shown to pupils. They read it silently and were then taken aside and individually asked three questions about the text.

Since it was for comparison purposes, the test was administered to a sample of both the NBTL (209) and non-NBTL (152) classes (Higgins et al. 2000).

The results were very pleasing, such that the Ireland Aid Evaluation described them as “astonishing” in that children in breakthrough classes were reading and writing at levels equivalent to Grade 4 or higher in non breakthrough classes (MoE, 2002).

Higgins et al. (2000) also stated that the results indicated the effectiveness of the method, materials and training procedures under NBTL.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Zambia, low reading levels have been a major problem, though recently, good reading performance in the lower primary has been recorded for PRP classes. However the evaluation of the performance did not include the pupils with reading problems, hence there arose the need to find out the impact of the new reading approach to the poor readers. This study addressed that need.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives that guided this study were as follows:

1.3.1 General

- To find out whether the poor readers were benefiting from the ‘new child’ centred approach to learning to read under the PRP.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

These were to find out if:

- the poor readers had acquired the initial literacy skills
- the poor readers were developing literacy skills in English.

- the classrooms had adequate reading material to support reading development.
- the reading books were available and ascertain whether the books were being utilised by the poor readers.
- the classroom teachers were oriented towards helping the poor readers acquire literacy skills.

1.4 Significance of the study

It was hoped that the findings would be used to establish the impact of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) to the poor reader considering that the Ministry of Education has so far not carried out any formal study or evaluation in this regard. The results would also highlight the predicament in which the poor readers might find themselves and provide grounds for adjusting the reading time and activities to benefit the poor readers.

It was further hoped that the findings would be useful to stakeholders and researchers interested in assessing the effects of current reading programmes on poor readers.

It was important to clearly understand the problem of poor reading in schools as it has had serious consequences such as increasing the drop out rate in schools and greatly decreasing the opportunities for gainful employment in future (Lerner, 1997).

1.5 Delimitation of Study

The study was carried out in two districts in the Northern Province, that is, Kasama and Mpika. This was because they were the initial places where the programme was piloted and so it had been in existence for a longer time compared with most towns. The

Northern Province was also found to be a more favourable region to the researcher because of being well acquainted with the language spoken in the area, that is, Icibemba.

1.6 Limitation of Study

There were a number of factors that restricted the scope and breadth of this study. These include:

- locations of the schools were extremely far apart from each other. This implied substantial portions of time being spent on travel and worse still focussing only on those schools which were easily accessible.
- limited time prevented the researcher from involving certain schools.
- matters of financial constraints were also unavoidable. This is because coming up with generalizable findings needed a larger sample, which this study was not able to have due to limitations in financial resources.
- the one-to-one interview method on reading habits was found to be limiting since as is known, matters of accuracy and honesty on the part of pupils could not be guaranteed.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

Reading: This is a deliberate process of looking at and understanding written language (Williams, 1998).

Reading competence: A skill demonstrated when a reader has access to interpretation of written language and is able to “break the code,” that is, to make sense of the symbols and systems of language (Wong, 1998).

Reading comprehension: This involves reading words from a text and having a clear understanding of what is written.

Poor readers: Refers to pupils who have not made satisfactory progress even after being given literacy instructions under the New Primary Reading Programme (PRP). Such pupils are usually classified as learning disabled (LD).

Reading problems: Refers to the primary difficulties that children who do not learn to read easily encounter with phonetic decoding and fluent word identification as they read.

Language processing skills: Refers to the skills needed to perceive and recognise words, and to combine them into phrases, sentences and paragraphs as well as meet the requirements of competent reading.

Phonological awareness: Is generally used to describe the knowledge that the sounds of words are distinct from the words' meanings. This may include sensitivity to syllables and morphemes (Wong, 1998).

Phonological processing: Is the ability to make use of phonological information when processing written and oral language.

Phonemic awareness: Refers to the conscious recognition of individual sounds in words, for example, /k/ /a/ /t/ are the phonemes of the word 'cat'.

Phonemes: Are the smallest units of speech sounds.

Morphemes: Are units of meaning.

Phonological segmentation: Analysing words into phoneme-sized units (ibid).

Phoneme blending: Blending letter sounds

Word recognition: This refers to information about phonological awareness, letter identification, sound-letter correspondence knowledge, word-attack skills and sight word reading (Kamhi, 2001).

Decoding skill: This is the ability to decipher words represented by print (Wong, 1998).

New Breakthrough To literacy: This is the revised version of the original Molteno Breakthrough to literacy programme from South Africa. The approach requires that a child learns to read and write in a native language before attempting to do this in a foreign official language.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Zambia, as in much of the sub-Saharan Africa, the ability to read in English is not only of economic use to the country, but also of educational importance to individuals, since it is the medium of instruction for most primary and secondary schools.

English and Primary Education in Zambia

Most African countries like Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe opted for English as the official language in order to modernise and unify those countries. In terms of modernisation, it was thought that English, the language of the global village, would enhance commercial development through facilitating international contacts. As regards unification, Zambia favoured the 'One Zambia', 'One Nation' approach and emphasised the use of English in public domains and schools. However, using English in education to bring about unity and modernisation has not been an unqualified success. While English succeeded in preventing conflicts in the educational arena between competing language groups,

It has created division between, on the one hand, those groups who have access to English, typically members of the elite, and on the other hand, those who do not, that is mostly the poor in rural areas. If modernisation has as one of its aims a nation that is educated, which implies a nation that can read, then the use of English in primary schools is a double edged sword ... educating the minority of individual pupils who move on towards the coveted white colour jobs (Williams 1998; 67).

Upon enrolment into grade one, pupils were expected to move very quickly from the position of learning to read in English, to one of reading English to learn (Williams, 1993). It has been widely recognised anyhow that the primary school system in Zambia, which has been the foundation of formal education for the few and the only formal education for the great majority was far from satisfactory. It should be born in mind that most teachers have been working in exceptionally difficult circumstances: too many pupils in classes, books are not enough and pupil attendance may be erratic, (MoE, 1992). In as much as this scenario contributes to the difficulties pupils may experience in learning to read in English, there are also other factors at play. The fact that initial reading in Zambia was carried out in English, a language that most children have very little or no knowledge of when they start school, largely contributed to the extremely low levels of both reading and writing exhibited by most Zambian children (MoE, 1996; Tambulukani, 2001; Sampa, 2003).

Furthermore, the methods and classroom approaches to reading, such as the 'look and say' method, resulted in most pupils in primary schools levels of reading in English to be inadequate for learning to take place.

The definition of reading provided above indicates that knowledge of the language of the text is essential in helping the learner to learn to read. It enables learners to guess at the identity of words with or without using graphic clues and it may also help them guess the meanings of words from context. A particularly careful approach is therefore needed with learners who have little knowledge of English if they are to learn and read successfully in a language (Mwanakatwe, 1968).

Initial reading approaches employed in the United Kingdom assume that the learner already knows the language and accordingly focus upon decoding, taking for granted that the learner will understand what has been decoded. With regard to this, the Zambian approaches in teaching initial reading of English as a second language needed to be modified (William, 1998). Moreover, second language learning is a process that takes a long period of time, whether in the classroom setting or an informal out-of-class setting. The extent of the learning depends in part on the duration, amount of richness of the input, what the learner hears or reads, and also the type of language activities in which learners engage, such as, repeating phrases, listening to the teacher, singing songs, as well as writing stories (William, 1998).

Relevance of NBTL

The realisation that the local socio-cultural norm in which the child is growing up equally affects the rate at which the child can read and learn in second language has led to some educational approaches coming up with a curriculum that suits the environment of the child. Indeed education does not take place in a socio-cultural void, and educational approaches which are merely 'transplanted' from one country to the other usually fail for lack of appreciation of differences such as, social values, attitude towards authority figures and peers (William, 1998). UNESCO (2003) also states that there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue or first language instruction.

The New Breakthrough To Literacy (NBTL) is one programme sharing such arguments and has therefore, revised its original Breakthrough To Literacy (BTL) programme, designing a more sustainable and 'friendly' Zambian version of the BTL.

Redesigning the programme, to enable children learn to read in a familiar Zambian language, makes it possible for a particular child to identify with the activities in her/his school quite easily and school ceases to be alien. In the face of many languages and dialects in Zambia, a familiar language is not the one necessarily spoken in a home (as it may vary from home to home) but rather, it is the common language spoken by the majority of children at school.

General Aims of New Breakthrough to Literacy

As one of its principles, UNESCO has set out to encourage education in the mother tongue, along with bilingual or multilingual education, such that the ability to communicate in one's own language is to a greater extent a right, with the International Mother Language Day observed every 21st February since the year 2000 (UNESCO, 2003).

Develop collaborative and independent learning skills

The 'friendly' NBTL was first piloted in some selected schools of the Northern Province in Icibemba. The Icibemba breakthrough to literacy had empirical evidence that gave rise to hope such that the NBTL entered another development phase in two local languages, that is, Cinyanja and Silozi. Higgins et al. (2000) further state that this programme had already been evaluated and was acknowledged as an effective approach for promoting initial literacy in children's mother tongue. In January 2002, the NBTL was further expanded to every zone centre school nationwide. Overall, NBTL was said to be contributing to a significant improvement in levels of literacy in the pilot schools. The astounding results of the NBTL prompted the MoE to implement the programme to every Grade 1 class nationwide from January 2003. The NBTL was also said to have a positive impact on the present classroom practice and was providing an impetus for a new and

take dictation of words and sentences (MoE, 2002)

more enlightened child-centred philosophy and approach to instruction. The changes most frequently cited include a warm and accepting classroom climate as well as innovative instructional strategies (MoE, 2002). It is some of these positive attributes of the NBTL, which this research was fascinated with and so wanted to establish this in the case of the poor reader.

General Aims of New Breakthrough to Literacy

Currently, the NBTL has an expectation that by the end of the course learners should be able to:

- read simple texts fluently and effectively
- write their own stories legibly, neatly and in straight lines
- develop collaborative and independent learning skills.

The teacher has been mandated to ensure that each child in his/her care has successfully gained the greatest achievement and gift from education: being able to read and write (MoE, 2002).

As regards outcomes learners are expected to:

- demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the writing system of their language, knowing that: - letters make up words, words make up sentences, punctuation shows where sentences begin and end.
- go from hearing or saying a sentence, to writing and reading it.
- write original stories or descriptions that are three or more sentences long.
- read storybooks fluently, as well as other stories written by learners in the class.
- arrange words alphabetically according to the first letters.
- take dictation of words and sentences (MoE, 2002).

Special Features of New Breakthrough

According to MoE (2002) some of the special features that have enabled this course to work include the fact that it facilitates a learner-centred approach in four ability groups. NBTL also recognises the learner's own particular experiences, that is, with regard to strengths and weaknesses of the learner as well as learning needs that may arise thereof (an important feature highlighted in the Salamanca statement) and allows for cooperative learning, that is, it promotes and encourages group work as well as allowing individuals to develop at their own pace, in carefully graded pace groups. The exceptional features highlighted are expected to be very instrumental in helping the slow learners in class to perform better.

New Breakthrough's Success

The success of the New Breakthrough to Literacy lies in its uniqueness, in that it uses a combination of methods. It has not relied on one, as other reading courses in the past have done. Research has established that individuals learn in different ways, therefore a course that uses a variety of approaches to teaching reading is most likely to succeed. While New Breakthrough is based on a Language Experience Approach, it also includes other approaches like Phonics, Syllabic, Look and Say and "Real Books" which allows learners to read real books (MoE, 2002).

Other Factors related to the Success of NBTL

According to Sampa (2003) the reading and writing levels are improving because of the different factors that have been put in place by Ministry of Education such as:

- effective teacher training programme. The training of teachers has been imbedded in the Ministry of Education system with trainers at zone level (cluster of 10 schools), district, province and national levels for the in-service training. Colleges are also training the Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC) students during the one-year college based programme.

- attractive classroom environment. This has attracted a lot of children and pupil attendance has improved in schools. Children find the rich-reading environment and are not bored as they are able to find something meaningful to do in school. The teaching/learning materials in schools for literacy include the Teachers' Guides, Learners Activity Books, Conversation Posters and Rainbow Readers series of books. It is hoped that once the reading and writing skills have been achieved in both Zambian languages and English the children will learn better in other subjects and this will eventually lead to a literate nation in which people read more books than before.

Sampa (2003) has also pointed out that parents are involved in the teaching/learning process at the schools. They have continued to support the teachers and encourage children by: making a follow up on progress made by the children, discussing reading and writing issues with teachers and how they could help at home with home-work, reading to children and listening to children read as well as attend special days like Parents' Day and Open Days.

Tambulukani (2001) also highlights a key factor for the sustained success of the programme, that is, the high achievement levels in reading and writing scored in the first

two years of primary education in both local language and English. This is said to have raised the morale of teachers, parents and learners themselves. Teachers have been motivated to work hard even under difficult general working conditions seeing their learners begin to read and write.

Overview of the Course

The New Breakthrough course is divided into three stages, that is:

Stage 1- Early and Late: learners are introduced to the routine, pre-reading activities and the first set of core vocabulary.

Stage 2- Early, Middle and Late: learners work on different sets of core vocabulary and

Stage 3- when learners have broken through to literacy and start more challenging work.

The daily routines for each stage vary slightly. The school day however provides very little time to teach all that the learners need to learn hence the need to follow the time frame of the course. This is to allow for equal amounts of teacher time for each group in class and help emphasise the most important parts of the lesson, giving them more time (MoE 2002).

Organising Pace Groups

At the end of Stage 1, an initial assessment of the learners is done and results are used to place them in four roughly equal pace groups. As each group progresses, they are tested at the end of every set core vocabulary to determine whether a group progresses to the next set of core vocabulary, or continues to revise the work on the previous set. At this stage some individuals are moved into either a faster or a slower pace group as appropriate. This calls for a lot of revision and remedial work to enable learners to catch

up. Each group sits at the teacher's corner twice a week except for the slower pace groups who require more time with the teacher (MoE 2002).

Day 5

This is a special day set aside to help learners identified in the week as having problems for example the poor readers. These are seen individually, in subgroups or in whole groups in the teaching corner for revision or remedial work. In this way, the learners with problems and those with Special Educational Needs like dyslexia, are accorded more meeting time with the teacher; three times each week (MoE, 2002).

Poor Readers and Dyslexics: Disordered or just extreme?

There has been an on going debate as to whether children who experience severe reading difficulties in learning to read and write are qualitatively different from the children of poor reading ability, who presumably represent the lower end of a normal distribution of reading abilities (Gathercole & Baddeley, 1993). One view is that children with the most serious reading problems merely represent the extreme lower end of the normal distribution of reading ability. In this case the experimental studies of researchers such as Baddeley, Logie and Ellis (1988) as well as Seidenburg, Bruck, Fornarolo and Backman (1985) failed to yield any qualitative difference in the reading characteristics of dyslexic children and normal readers. The other view, however, claims that dyslexic children are different from poor readers. In particular, Stanovich, Nathan, and Vala-Rossi (1986) distinguish between "garden variety" poor readers who are developmentally lagging behind normal readers as a consequence of their general weak cognitive profiles, and genuinely dyslexic subjects. Stanovich et al. (1986) propose that true dyslexic readers are

distinctive in terms of their cognitive profiles, and should be characterised as disordered rather than lagging behind in developmental terms.

Poor Readers

Wong (1998) states that most children classified as learning disabled (LD) are poor readers. About 10-15% of the general school population experience difficulty in reading. As a matter of fact, several authorities suggest that reading difficulties are the principal cause of failure in school (Mercer & Mercer 1993). According to Rayner et al. (2001) individual differences in reading achievement are often due to differences in the ability to read words, and indeed, children and adults display a wide range of ability to read words. Wong (1998) also found that learning to read is a task that poses a considerable difficulty for between 4% and 10% of children who are diagnosed as dyslexic or reading disabled because their reading problems cannot be blamed on a lack of general intelligence, motivation, or adequate classroom experience. Reading experiences strongly influence the students' self image and feeling of competency. In addition to this, reading failure can lead to misbehaviour, anxiety and lack of motivation.

At any stage, poor readers are characterised by over reliance on context and guessing strategies to read. They do not prefer to guess but use it as a default strategy when the symbol-to-sound associations cannot be deciphered with accuracy or fluency. Perfetti (1995) points out that though the use of context, to repeat the obvious, is important in reading, skilled readers do not use it to identify words but to interpret words and sentences.

Although a great majority of students who do not learn to read easily have a primary problem with phonetic decoding and fluent word identification, some students are characterised by a very slow rate of word recognition or naming speed. However, not all poor readers have similar characteristics (Adams, 1990).

Early Reading Problems

Mann (1991) justifies one very successful approach to explaining early reading problems. This approach is guided by the assumption that reading is first and foremost a language skill, and it raises the possibility that many instances of reading problems are the consequence of language problems. Recent research by Badian, Mc Anulty, Duffy & Als (1990) also indicates that in many cases the root of reading difficulties in children is language - based. Psychologists, educators, and neurologists have all, in one-way or another, tried to identify the basis of early reading difficulty. Although they have not always stated so explicitly their efforts have been guided by some basic assumptions about reading and the demands that it makes upon children's perceptual and cognitive abilities.

Spoken Language is Critical to Readers

According to Wong (1998) there are two pieces of background information useful in understanding the role of language problems in poor reading. One concerns how writing systems transcribe the units of spoken language; the other concerns how skilled readers depend upon certain language skills.

How Writing Systems Represent Language

Mann (1991) illustrates how all-writing systems use symbols to represent the units of spoken language. A type of unit represented determines the type of writing system: ideography, logography, syllabary, or alphabet. Ideas are represented by ideographies for example road signs, morphemes are represented by logographies like the Chinese writing style, syllables are represented by syllabaries like the Hebrew writing system, whereas phonemes are represented by alphabets. Different systems make different demands on the beginning reader because of the different type of the unit they transcribe. The beginning reader needs to appreciate the units that his/her writing system is representing, otherwise it will be difficult to understand how written words relate to their spoken language counterparts.

Vygotsky (1962) also highlights how writing and speech is symbolisation but at different levels. Writing is symbolisation at secondary level meaning it is much harder and advanced than mere speech, which is symbolisation at primary level. This entails that a written word is a symbol of a spoken word (secondary symbolisation) while a spoken word is a symbol of an idea (primary symbolisation). In this case, even the minimal development of writing skill requires a high level of abstraction in children. This abstract quality of written language is a main stumbling block for children and could be the reason why learning to read and write in a language that children have not yet learnt to speak is more difficult than doing so in a language they already know orally, a very likely situation under the PRP.

To know how the English alphabet functions, Wong (1998) further stipulates that one should be sensitive to the fact that spoken language can be broken down into phonemes since alphabets represent phonemes. Thus critical details of learning to read depend on the writing system.

The English Alphabet: A Morphophonological Transcription

The English writing system is at base an alphabet, consisting of vowels and consonants. It does not however provide the consistent one-to-one mapping of letter to phonemes that one finds in Spanish for example. Rather, Wong (1998) points out that the mapping between letters and phonemes often involves a deeper, more abstract level of linguistic representation, referred to as morphophonological because it combines phonemes and morphemes. For a reader of English, the problem is that it will sometimes fail to represent the phonetic representations with which one is more familiar. In this way, English reading often demands memorised representations of units larger than the phoneme from the beginning. Moving to productive reading however requires more than memorising printed words (Rayner, et al. 2001).

It is important to mention here that, in as much as the Ibibemba alphabet also consists of vowels and some consonants it however provides a much more consistent one-to-one mapping of phonemes onto letters. In this case, the characteristics of the Ibibemba writing system are expected to play an important role in the reading success of Zambian pupils. This is referred to because other similar orthographies like Finnish with a high degree of phoneme-letter correspondence have indicated high levels of literacy in cross language studies (Muller, 1998).

Virtues of a Writing System

One general benefit of alphabets is that they transcribe phonemes as opposed to words and syllables. Rayner et al. (2001) referred to this association of letters with phonemes as the alphabetic principle, allowing alphabets to be productive. That is, a small set of symbols (letters) can be used to write an indefinitely large number of words. This greatly reduces the number of symbols, which a child must learn to recognise and reproduce. Besides being economical, they are highly productive (the relation between written words and spoken words is highly rule governed) unlike the Chinese logography with thousands of distinct characters (Wong, 1998).

Phoneme Awareness: A Special Requirement of Alphabetic Systems

Though alphabets have clear advantages, they nonetheless pose an obstacle for poor readers. This is because poor readers might have problems distinguishing and remembering the various letter shapes. They might have problems with processing spoken language and with understanding their teachers' instructions. They might lack an awareness of the linguistic units that the written words represent. It is important to distinguish between language processing and language awareness, as mere processing of spoken language does not automatically entail knowing units of a language. Distinguishing between language awareness and language processing however involves making a distinction between linguistic and meta-linguistic knowledge. Linguistic knowledge is used when processing a language while meta-linguistic knowledge is used to introspect upon the properties of language- the units, rules, and representations that are a tacit, unconscious part of our processing ability. To read in English, which in this case the Grade twos (sample group of this research) are just learning to do, would be readers

must go one step farther than merely being a speaker/hearer of the language, to having an explicit, 'metalinguistic' awareness of certain aspects of the language, phonemes in particular (Wong, 1998). This sensitivity is commonly referred to as phoneme awareness.

Essential Language Skills to Beginning Readers

Research shows that there are basically two language skills that are cardinal to beginning readers, that is, language processing skills and phoneme awareness (Goetzinger, Dirks, & Baer, 1960; Adams, 1990; Blachman, 1997; Stanovich, 1993; Torgesen & Wagner, 1987; Stanovich, Cunningham, & Cramer, 1984).

Language Processing Skills

Beginning readers should possess language-processing skills at four different levels. First, they need speech perception skills (Goetzinger, et al., 1960) that make it possible to distinguish the words of their vocabulary, like the difference between 'rat' and 'hat'. They also need vocabulary and morphological skills which otherwise affect the reading of poor readers (Wolf, 1984). Beginning readers should also have adequate linguistic short-term memory. Finally, they should further be able to recover the syntactic and semantic structure of phrases and sentences. With regard to language processing skills and poor reading, Wong (1998) explained that since the 1970s, research has uncovered some link between difficulties in learning to read and difficulties with some aspects of spoken language processing as those outlined above.

Phoneme Awareness

Besides language processing skills, the English orthography requires successful readers to also be conscious of certain abstract units of that language. Children must know about these units and also about phonemes if the alphabet is to make sense. Numerous studies

show that early phonological awareness is among the best predictors of success at learning to read in different languages that are written in an alphabetic orthography (Adams, 1990; Blachman, 1997; Stanovich, 1993; Torgesen & Wagner, 1987; Stanovich, et al., 1984). As has been alluded to earlier, lack of phoneme awareness results in reading problems. Wong (1998) further illustrates that the use of phonetic representation remains a chronic problem for individuals who are poor readers.

Other Causes of Poor Reading

Torgesen (2002) describes another significant group of poor readers composed largely of children from families of lower socio-economic or minority status groups who enter school significantly delayed in a much broader range of pre-reading skills such as awareness of alphabet sounds and letters. Since the children are delayed not only in phonological but also in general oral language skills, they are deficient in both the critical kinds of knowledge and skills required for good reading comprehension.

Higgins et al. (2000) also illustrate some factors associated with reading failure which are more to do with the condition of the pupils. These include high absentee rate, poor motivation, low self-esteem and hunger, tiredness and mistreatment of pupils.

Scarborough (1991) has also found that if there is a history of reading difficulties in the family then there is a higher chance of a child having reading difficulties.

Helping Poor Readers

To effectively help poor readers, research has demonstrated that it is cardinal to offer early intervention preferably during pre-school age as this helps to reduce and avoid future literacy problems (Badian, et al., 1990; Torgesen, 2001; Vellutino, Scanlon, Sipay,

Small, Pratt, Chen & Denckla, 1996). When children experiencing reading difficulties are identified, teachers can tailor instruction to address their needs (Badian, et al. 1990; Catts 1995). If adequate screening and assessment procedures are in place, early intervention may begin even before formal instruction in reading. Furthermore, Rayner et al. (2001) points out that some studies have suggested that phoneme instruction can bring in phonemic awareness and in turn reading (Ball & Blachman, 1988; Mann, 1991; Blachman, 1989; Clark & Uhry, 1995). Even though no one intervention works for all children with reading difficulties, interventions that succeed for many children have certain characteristics in common, such as more instructional time.

From the review of literature, it has been noted that upon attaining independence in 1964 Zambia opted for English as the official language both in schools and public domains. Most children had no knowledge of English when they started school and this contributed to the low levels of reading and writing displayed by most Zambian children. To correct the situation, the Zambian Ministry of Education introduced the New Breakthrough to Literacy programme, which enhances the teaching of initial reading skills in a familiar Zambian language. There are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue or first language instruction. Studies (Morris, 1994; Muller, 1998; Torgesen & Wagner, 1987) have shown that it is easier for learners to acquire literacy skills in a language with a high degree of phoneme-letter correspondence (for example Finnish, Italian and Ibibemba) than it is with languages that have a low degree of phoneme-letter correspondence (such as English). A lot of studies have been done in the area of reading showing that poor reading is very prevalent in schools. Several attempts have been made to explain early reading problems and a successful approach to this raises the possibility

that reading problems are a consequence of language problems. There are however other causes of poor reading related with the condition of pupils such as high absent rate and lack of motivation.

The target population in this study were all second graders from the urban basic schools

The above information on poor reading has been fundamental in helping the researcher understand the different issues that surrounded the aspect of poor reading. These included the prevalence of poor reading in schools and how this affected the morale and confidence of pupils as well as the numerous difficulties poor readers faced as they learnt to read. Although the phonetic approach was generally regarded as the easiest way of acquiring reading skills, early intervention measures were usually put in place to effectively help the poor readers.

urban basic schools and it was also felt that these schools making up 37.5 percent of all

It has also been noted that the teacher was the most important person in improving the reading skills of such pupils and therefore needed adequate training to understand the poor readers and how they could be helped. Altogether, this information had been very useful in the various stages while conducting the study.

the School, Kavenda Basic School, Kabale Basic School, Njanji Middle Basic School and Chibansa Middle Basic School

represented. The age of the pupils ranged from 6-11 for all the six schools. From each

school, two classes of second graders were picked, from which only five pupils per class

were needed for the study; that is, ten pupils from each school. For Njanji Basic School,

however, all the ten pupils were picked from one grade two class as other class teachers

had to attend to inter-schools' sporting activity which was taking place at the time of data

collection. The class teachers helped to select the poor readers from the already

established poor/ability groups in their classes. The teacher selected two males and three

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Target Population

The target population in this study were all second graders from the urban basic schools under the NBTL programme in Kasama and Mpika districts. Kasama District has a total of 11 urban schools while Mpika District has a total of 8 urban schools.

3.2 Description of the Sample

Kasama District had a total of 11 urban basic schools. Hence, it was felt that three schools making up 27 percent of all the urban schools in the district would be representative enough in this study. On the other hand, Mpika District had a total of 8 urban basic schools and it was also felt that three schools making up 37.5 percent of all the urban schools in Mpika would be representative enough for this study.

The total sample comprised 60 grade 2 pupils (31 males and 29 females) from the six selected coeducation basic schools in the urban area of Kasama and Mpika districts namely, Chifwani Basic School, Mubanga Chipoya Basic School, Kasenda Basic School, Kabale Basic School, Njanji Middle Basic School and Chibansa Middle Basic School respectively. The age of the pupils ranged from 6-11 for all the six schools. From each school, two classes of second graders were picked, from which only five pupils per class were needed for the study. That is, ten pupils from each school. For Njanji Basic School, however, all the ten pupils were picked from one grade two class as other class teachers had to attend to inter-schools' sporting activity which was taking place at the time of data collection. The class teachers helped to select the poor readers from the already established pace/ability groups in their classes. The teacher selected two males and three

females or vice-versa from the group of low performers who were also poor in reading tasks. Absence of educational/psychological assessment facilities in schools made it impossible for the researcher to eliminate exclusionary conditions such as emotional difficulties, neurological difficulties and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). In this case, the groups of poor readers in schools were a heterogeneous group with a possible presence of the factors outlined above.

Below is a table showing the distribution of subjects in the sample.

Gender Distribution According to Schools

School of participants	Male	Female	Total
Chifwani	5	5	10
Mubanga Chipoya	5	5	10
Kasenda	5	5	10
Kabale	5	5	10
Chibansa	6	4	10
Njanji	5	5	10
Total	31	29	60

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

3.3.1 Measures of Reading

Word Reading Task

To adequately carry out this task, the researcher came up with a list of words, which were adapted from the NBTL Teacher's Guide (MoE, 2002). The words ranged from simple to hard as can be seen from Appendices 5 and 6 on pages 88 and 89 for the English and Icibemba words respectively. The task began with two letter words, then one-syllable words, followed by two syllable words and finally three syllable words. The words were written on individual cards and displayed on the table face down. The word cards were however marked one to ten to indicate the order of reading, that is, starting with the one marked one (1) and finishing off with the one marked ten (10). The children were given a practice trial of five words. When they indicated that they were comfortable with this 'game' approach to the reading task, then the word reading task was presented.

This task was done twice, that is, for the Icibemba and English word cards, each with ten words. The total number of correct responses was the subject's score (maximum= 10 points, for Icibemba and English task).

Reading Comprehension Tasks

There were two different tasks for reading comprehension.

One was extracted from the Basic Skills Assessment Tool (BASAT) for reading and writing (MoE, 2002). The BASAT is an assessment tool, which measures the reading and writing skills of grade one and two children in order to identify those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It offers four picture illustrations each with three sentences to assess reading comprehension. Pupils were presented with all the three short sentences

per picture illustration and were expected to read all of them and then later point to the one that correctly described the picture illustration. No practice trials were administered. This reading comprehension was administered on a one-to-one basis, following the recommended procedure. The subject's score was the number of correct answers achieved (maximum score = 4).

The BASAT reading comprehension test was administered both in English and Ibibemba. (Refer to Appendices 1 and 2 on pages 84 and 85 for the English and Ibibemba BASAT respectively).

The other reading comprehension task was adapted from 'Tuli Nama' series of books (Appendix 8, page 91) and asking the pupil to say the sound it produced. The books (CDC, 1998). The books contain short passages and a picture of a wild animal. The pupils were expected to read the short passage and later answer some questions orally. Two story passages were used, one was about the Fox and the other about the Kalulu (indigenous for rabbit). Refer to Appendices 3 and 4 on pages 86 and 87 respectively. The Kalulu story was presented in Ibibemba while the Fox story was translated to English and so presented in English. Each subject's score was the number of correct responses given (maximum score = 4).

3.3.2 Additional Measures

Letter Knowledge

This task was individually administered. The examiner pointed at a letter from a letter template (refer to Appendix 8 on page 91) and the pupils were asked to say the name of a particular letter. No practice trials were administered. The subject's score was the number of correctly said letter names (maximum = 26).

Vowel Sound Knowledge

Like the letter sound knowledge task, this task was individually administered with the researcher pointing at a particular vowel on the vowel template. This template only had the five vowels /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/ as can be seen on Appendix 7 on page 90. The subject's score was the number of correctly said vowel sounds (maximum = 5)

Letter Sound Knowledge

This task is very similar to the above task. As a matter of fact, the above task is a subset of letter sound knowledge task. The letter sound knowledge task was also individually administered with the researcher pointing to a particular letter on the letter template (Appendix 8, page 91) and asking the pupil to say the sound it produced. The subject's score was the number of correctly said letter sounds (maximum = 26). No practice trials were administered.

It was important to assess the above three factors in this study as the literacy programme the children are subjected to in the schools is phonologically based.

Reading Behaviour

This task was individually administered. The examiner asked the pupils a few questions related to reading to establish each pupil's reading behaviour. The questions had to do with whether or not they enjoyed reading, how frequently they read and where they preferred to read from, home or in class. (Refer to Appendix 9, page 92 for details).

Interview for Teachers

An interview was administered to each grade two teacher, who was involved with this study. The researcher was interested in finding out from the class teachers the general performance of poor readers and if there was any improvement she/he noticed from the teaching and the extra Day 5 devoted to poor readers. (Refer to Appendix 10, page 93 for the interview schedule).

3.4 Procedure

To suit the Zambian regulations, permission to carry out research work in the schools from the concerned authorities was sought. This was first sought from the MoE before getting down to the schools; that is the District Educational Boards Secretary (DEBS), the head teachers and later the particular grade teachers in both Kasama and Mpika. Permission from the above authorities was granted without any conditionality attached. All testing and data collection was done in June 2004.

Consideration was also made to create an atmosphere where pupils would carry out the tasks without them thinking or feeling that they were doing it purely for research purposes as this would have made some students reserved in their application of efforts in the tasks. To avoid this, the researcher involved the grade teachers in selecting pupils to be involved in the research and encouraged the pupils to perform and behave well. After administering all the tests outlined above, the researcher then interviewed the class teachers.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done on the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Comparative study techniques like the t-test were employed to compare performance between similar tasks. Frequency and average performance scores were also utilized for effective comparison.

In the classification, each task was rated in categories of very poor, poor, average, good and very good rating categories according to the corresponding performance. The performance categories were created according to the scores as is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1a: Rating of Categories According to Performance in Tasks

Task	Performance category
Comprehension	0 = Very poor
	1 = Poor
	2 = Average
	3 = Good
	4 = Very Good
Single Word Reading	0 = Very poor (<i>guessed the letters & sounds</i>)
	1 = Poor (<i>read 2 letter words</i>)
	2 = Average (<i>read 1 syllable words</i>)
	3 = Good (<i>read 2 syllable words</i>)
	4 = Very good (<i>read 3 syllable words</i>)
Letter name / Sound Knowledge	0 = Very poor (<i>0-4 letters / sounds</i>)
	1 = Poor (<i>5-9 letters / sounds</i>)
	2 = Average (<i>10-14 letters / sounds</i>)
	3 = Good (<i>15-20 letters / sounds</i>)
	4 = Very good (<i>21-26 letters / sounds</i>)
Vowel knowledge	0 = Very poor (<i>0-1 vowel</i>)
	1 = Poor (<i>2 vowels</i>)
	2 = Average (<i>3 vowels</i>)
	3 = Good (<i>4 vowels</i>)
	4 = Very good (<i>5 vowels</i>)

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

As has already been stated earlier, the impact of the new reading programme on the poor reader with regard to acquisition of reading skills was looked at extensively, that is, ability to read and understand short passages, read single words as well as appreciating different letters and their sounds. Short interviews centred on reading held with the teachers and pupils helped to understand the performance of the pupils.

4.1 Comparison of performance in English and Icibemba for word reading and comprehension tasks.

To compare differences in performance between equivalent tasks administered in Icibemba or in English, related t-tests were conducted for the word reading ability and reading comprehension tasks. There was No significant difference between the performances in the word reading tasks, both conducted in Icibemba and in English emerged ($t_{(59)} = .237$, p not significant).

The reading comprehension tasks conducted both in English and Icibemba however show a significantly better performance in the Icibemba reading comprehension tasks ($t_{(59)} = 25.727$, $p < .001$). The comparison of the two Passage Reading Comprehension tasks is however tentative, since both tests might still contain differences in item difficulty, although both tests were originally constructed to have as close as possible to equal properties. This will be further illustrated using frequency tables below.

4.1.1 Word Reading Tasks

Table 1: Single Word Reading Ability in Icibemba

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor, guesses letters &/ or vowel sounds	51	85.0
Average, reads one syllable words	1	1.7
Good, reads 2 syllable words	8	13.3
Total	60	100.0

To further illustrate the fact that there is no significant difference in the ability to read words, the above frequency table shows the performance in Icibemba with the majority of pupils 85% performing very poorly. Only 13% could read 2 syllable Icibemba words while the mentioned 85% had difficulties reading 2 letter words.

A similar scenario is depicted below to show the performance in reading English words according to schools.

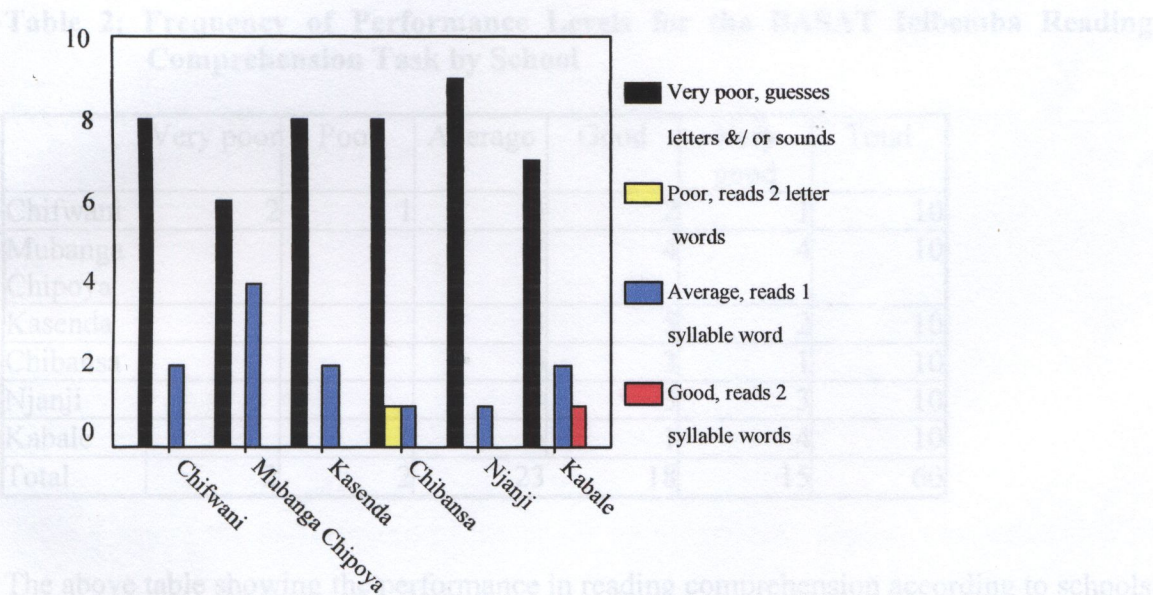


Figure I: Frequency of Performance Levels in the English Word Reading task by Schools

The bar chart above clearly indicates that in all the six schools, the majority of pupils performed very poorly just like in the Icibemba tasks for word reading.

At Chibansa Basic school only one child could read 2 letter words and 1 syllable words. Of all the sampled schools only one child at Kabale Basic School could read 2 syllable words.

Table 3: Frequency of Performance levels for the BASAT English Reading Comprehension Task

4.1.2 Reading Comprehension Tasks

As has already been pointed out using the t-test, the comprehension tasks show significantly better performance in the Icibemba reading comprehension tasks. It is important to mention here that upon discovering that the pupils could not read single words, they could not have managed to read short passages. Hence for the purpose of finding performance on comprehension tasks, the researcher read the passages for the pupils and later asked them to answer questions from the passage orally, on a one to one basis.

Table 2: Frequency of Performance Levels for the BASAT Icibemba Reading Comprehension Task by School

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very good	Total
Chifwani	2	1	4	2	1	10
Mubanga			2	4	4	10
Chipoya						
Kasenda			3	5	2	10
Chibansa			6	3	1	10
Njanji			4	3	3	10
Kabale		1	4	1	4	10
Total	2	2	23	18	15	60

Table 4 shows the performance of the pupils on the passage reading comprehension in

The above table showing the performance in reading comprehension according to schools clearly demonstrates the generally good performance in Icibemba BASAT reading comprehension task. In all the schools 3% of the pupils performed poorly while 38% however, performance in the Icibemba Reading Comprehension task (for faster listening comprehension, since the researcher read the passages for the pupils) was quite good, as

exhibited average performance with 55% performing above average. A frequency table of the performance in English is shown below.

Table 3: Frequency of Performance levels for the BASAT English ReadingComprehension Task

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor	13	21.7
Poor	13	21.7
Average	19	31.7
Good	12	20.0
Very good	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 3 shows 43% of the pupils performing below average in the English BASAT comprehension task whereas in the Icibemba BASAT reading comprehension only 3% performed below average as is indicated in Table 2 on page 38.

Table 4: Frequency of Performance Levels in the English Passage Reading Comprehension Task

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor	51	85.0
Poor	7	11.7
Average	1	1.7
Good	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 4 shows the performance of the pupils on the passage reading comprehension in English. The majority of the pupils were below average, that is, 96%, which is worse, compared to the performance on the English BASAT comprehension task with 64%. However, performance in the Icibemba Reading comprehension (or rather listening comprehension, since the researcher read the passages for the pupils) was quite good, as

can be seen from the Bar chart in Figure II (page 40), which is indicating over 80% of pupils performing above average.



Figure II: Frequency of Performance Levels in the Icibemba Passage Reading Comprehension Task

To further exemplify the chart above, Figure III below is used to show the actual performance in different schools. As can be seen the majority of pupils in most schools performed above average, with only Kabale Basic having a pupil who performed poorly.

Table 5: Frequency Performance Levels for Letter-Name Knowledge

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor, 1-4 letters	35	58.3
Poor, 5-9 letters	15	25.0
Average, 10-14 letters	2	3.3
Good, 15-20 letters	3	5.0
Very good, 21-26 letters	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

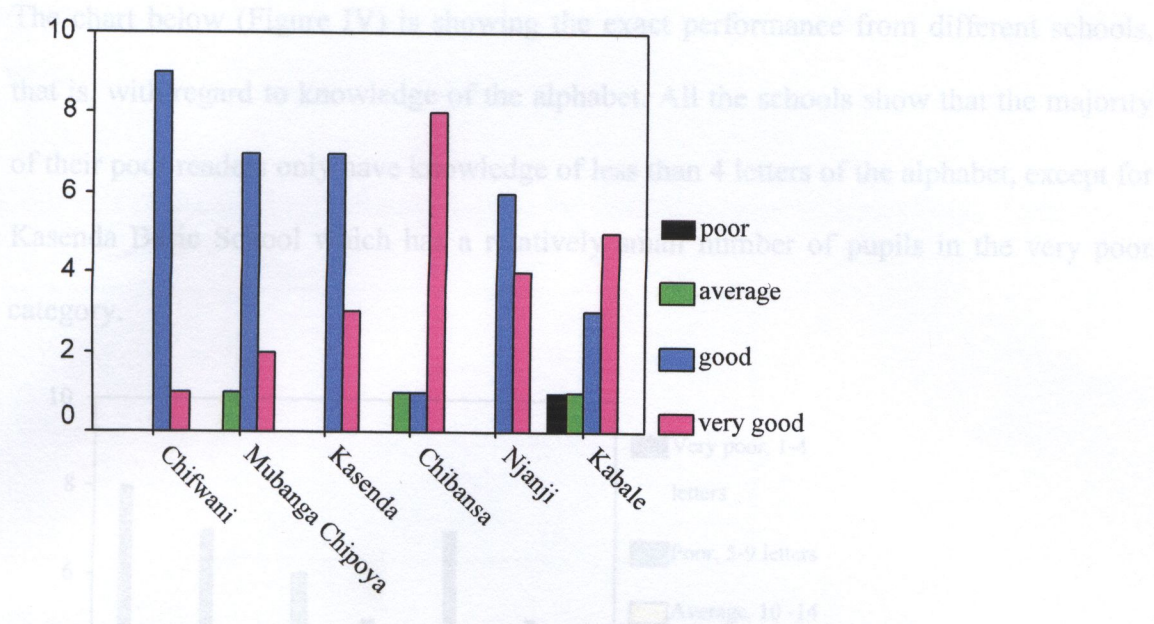


Figure III: Frequency of Performance levels in the Icibemba Passage Reading Comprehension Task by Schools

4.2 Knowledge of Alphabet Sounds and Letters

4.2.1 Letter-Name knowledge

It was observed that all the pupils had very little knowledge of the alphabet or letter names. As can be seen from table 5 below, the majority of the pupils, 58.3% only knew about 4 letters of the 26 letters in the alphabet. Very few pupils were acquainted with at least 10 letters of the alphabet, as 25% of the pupils only displayed to have knowledge of letters between 5 and 9. Only 8.3% demonstrated to have knowledge of at least 20 alphabet letters. This is clearly observed from the frequency table below.

Table 6 below shows the extent to which the pupils had awareness of the vowel sounds.

Table 5: Frequency Performance Levels for Letter-Name Knowledge

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor, 1-4 letters	35	58.3
Poor, 5-9 letters	15	25.0
Average, 10 -14 letters	2	3.3
Good, 15 –20 letters	3	5.0
Very good, 21-26 letters	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

The chart below (Figure IV) is showing the exact performance from different schools, that is, with regard to knowledge of the alphabet. All the schools show that the majority of their poor readers only have knowledge of less than 4 letters of the alphabet, except for Kasenda Basic School which has a relatively small number of pupils in the very poor category.

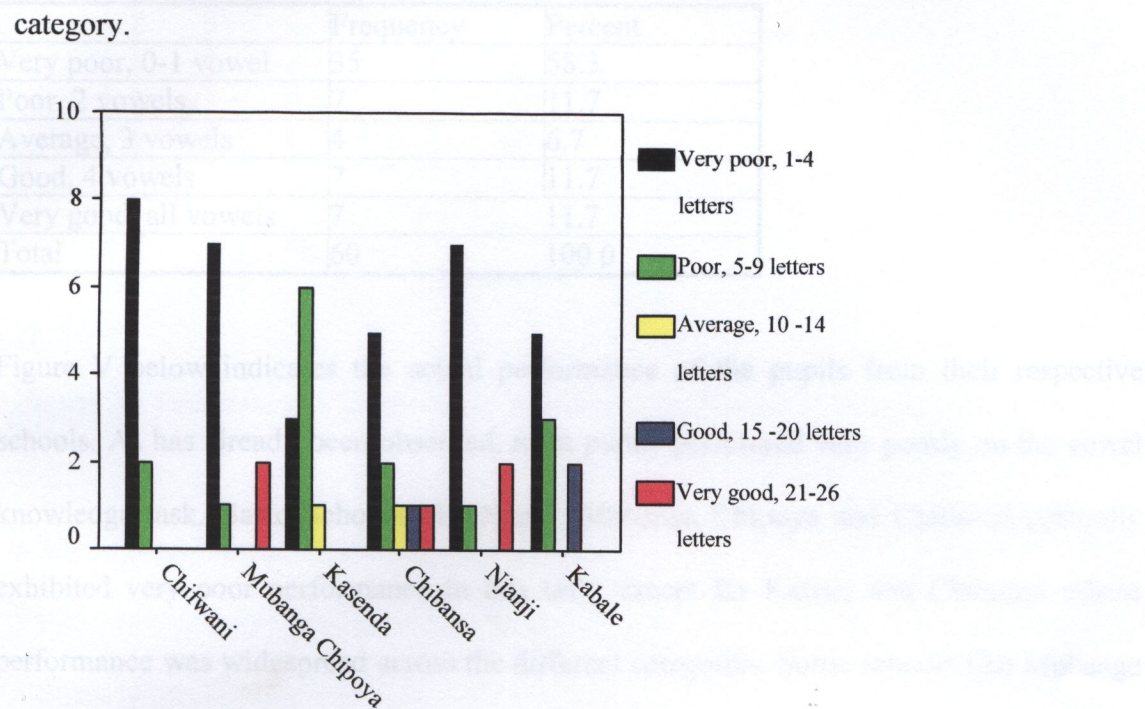


Figure IV: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Letter-Name Knowledge task by Schools

4.2.2 Vowel Sound Knowledge

Table 6 below shows the extent to which the pupils had awareness of the vowel sounds.

As is indicated in the table the majority of the pupils, 58.3%, were only aware of one vowel sound. As a matter of fact, a large percentage of the pupils in the very poor category (43.3%) did not seem to be acquainted with any vowel sounds at all, as they merely guessed the supposed sounds (see Appendix A on page 94). Pupils in the ‘poor’ category with knowledge of 2 vowel sounds were 11.7%, which is the same magnitude

for the ‘good’ and ‘very good’ categories with knowledge of 4 and 5 vowel sounds respectively. There were only 6.7% of the pupils who were aware of 3 vowel sounds.

Table 6: Frequency Performance Levels for the Vowel Sound Knowledge Task

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor, 0-1 vowel	35	58.3
Poor, 2 vowels	7	11.7
Average, 3 vowels	4	6.7
Good, 4 vowels	7	11.7
Very good, all vowels	7	11.7
Total	60	100.0

Figure V below indicates the actual performance of the pupils from their respective schools. As has already been observed, most pupils performed very poorly on the vowel knowledge task. Basic Schools like Njanji, Mubanga Chipoya and Chifwani generally exhibited very poor performance in this task, except for Kabale and Chibansa whose performance was widespread across the different categories. Some schools like Mubanga Chipoya and Njanji Basic Schools did not have any pupils with acquaintance of all the vowel sounds. Appendix D (page 95) further shows the specific performance according to schools in the very poor category, revealing how the majority of the pupils did not understand the concept of vowels as they merely guessed at what actual sounds were supposed to be.

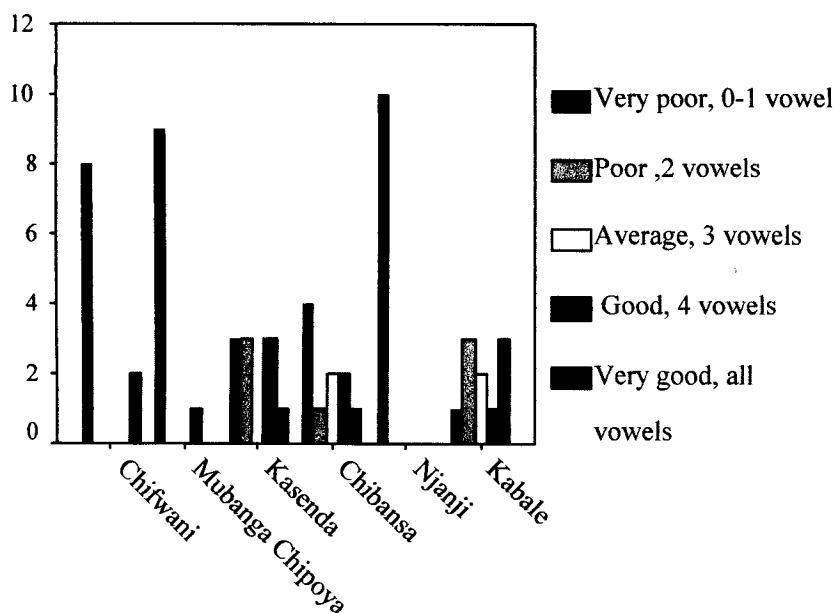


Figure V: Frequency of Performance levels for the Vowel Knowledge Task by Schools.

4.2.3 Letter-Sound Knowledge

Table 7 below shows the extent to which pupils have an idea of the letter sounds, which ultimately include vowel sounds.

Table 7: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Letter Sound Knowledge Task

	Frequency	Percent
Very poor, 0-4 sounds	54	90.0
Poor, 5-9 sounds	6	10.0
Total	60	100.0

The above table displays that 90% of the pupils performed very poorly with knowledge of only up to 4 alphabet sounds. Only 10% of the pupils seemed to have knowledge of about 9 alphabet sounds. Table 7 shows that other categories of performance like average, good and very good were not represented implying that none of the pupils was familiar with 10 or more letter sounds.

A similar table in Appendix B (page 94) however includes another category for pupils without any concept of sounds (which is basically a component of the very poor category) clearly indicates that the majority of pupils, 58.3%, had no concept of sounds at all. This further shows that the number of pupils with no concept of any sounds (58.3%) is much more than categories for the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’, which altogether had a representation of 41.7% pupils.

Figure VI, below equally indicates the extent to which the pupils are acquainted with the letter sounds, and Appendix E on page 95 further illustrates the actual performance of pupils from different schools. Mubanga Chipoya and Njanji Basic Schools again have the largest representation of pupils with no concept of sounds.

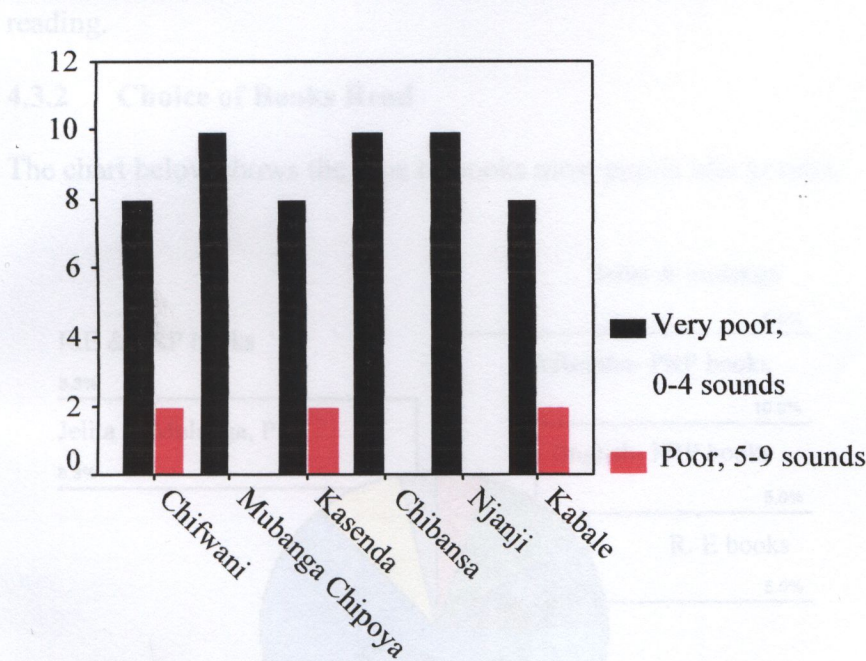


Figure VI: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Letter-Sound Knowledge Task According to Schools

4.3 Reading Behaviour

In order to clearly display several aspects of reading behaviour, tables and charts were again used.

4.3.1 Reading enjoyment

Table 8: Assessment of Pupils’ Reading

	Frequency	Percent
Don’t enjoy reading due to committing a lot of errors	6	10.0
Enjoys reading	54	90.0
Total	60	100.0

The above table indicates that 90% of the poor readers enjoyed reading as opposed to the remaining 10% who committed a lot of errors when reading and therefore did not enjoy reading.

4.3.2 Choice of Books Read

The chart below shows the type of books most pupils like to read.

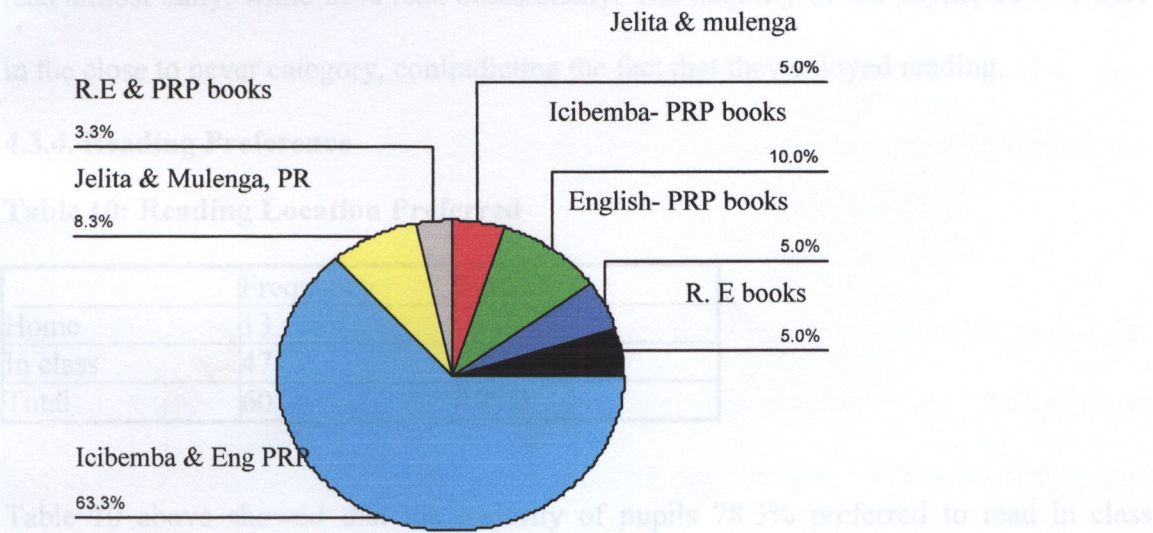


Figure VII: Books that Pupils like to Read by Percentage

Most pupils (63.3%) enjoyed reading both the Icibemba and English PRP storybooks while 10% and 5% preferred to read only the Icibemba and English PRP storybooks respectively. The English PRP storybooks, Jelita and Mulenga as well as the Religious Education (R.E) books do not seem to be very popular as they each have 5% representation on the chart. Few pupils liked reading the Jelita and Mulenga as well as the PRP books (8.3%), while a very small group (3.3%) liked reading the R.E books as well as the PRP books.

4.3.3 Reading frequency

Table 9: Pupils’ Reading Frequency

	Frequency	Percent
Close to never	34	56.7
Occasionally	15	25.0
Almost daily	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0

Although most pupils claimed to enjoy reading, the above table revealed that only 18.3% read almost daily, while 25% read occasionally. The majority of the pupils, 56.7%, were in the close to never category, contradicting the fact that they enjoyed reading.

4.3.4. Reading Preference

Table 10: Reading Location Preferred

	Frequency	Percent
Home	13	21.7
In class	47	78.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 10 above showed that the majority of pupils 78.3% preferred to read in class while21.7% prefer to read at home.

4.4 Information from Class Teachers

4.4.1 Sex of the Class Teachers

Most of the class teachers for the grade 2 classes studied were female, except for one. In all there were 8 teachers in charge of 11 grade 2 classes. It was observed that some Basic Schools like Chifwani, Kasenda, and Chibansa had the same teacher taking both classes while schools like Kabale and Mubanga Chipoya had one teacher for a particular class (see Appendix C, page 94). Njanji Basic School however only had one class (at the time of data collection) as has already been mentioned earlier.

4.4.2 Class Size and Size of the Poor Readers' Group

Figure VIII below, shows the different class sizes in the schools as well as the corresponding groups of poor readers. All the classes were generally huge, with numbers ranging from 38 - 63 and a mean size of 47. The size for the group of poor readers varied greatly ranging from 7 – 27 as can be seen from Figure VIII below. Kasenda Basic School in Kasama had the largest class sizes, that is, 59 and 63 with similarly large groups of poor readers, 16 and 18 respectively. One of the grade two classes at Chibansa and Chifwani Basic Schools had relatively small class sizes of 38 with 8 and 10 poor readers respectively. Kabale Basic School in Mpika had one of the largest groups of poor readers, that is, 27 for a class of 58 pupils.

Figure VIII below also indicates the variation in the sizes of poor readers across the different schools as well as within the same schools. For example Kabale Basic School had in one of its' classes 27 pupils in the group of poor readers while another class had only 10 pupils in the poor readers' group. Chibansa Basic School had very little difference between the groups of poor readers for the two classes had 8 and the other 9.

The sizes of the groups of poor readers at Mubanga Chipoya were 7 and 11, while Chifwani Basic School had 10 and 15 pupils in the groups for the poor readers.

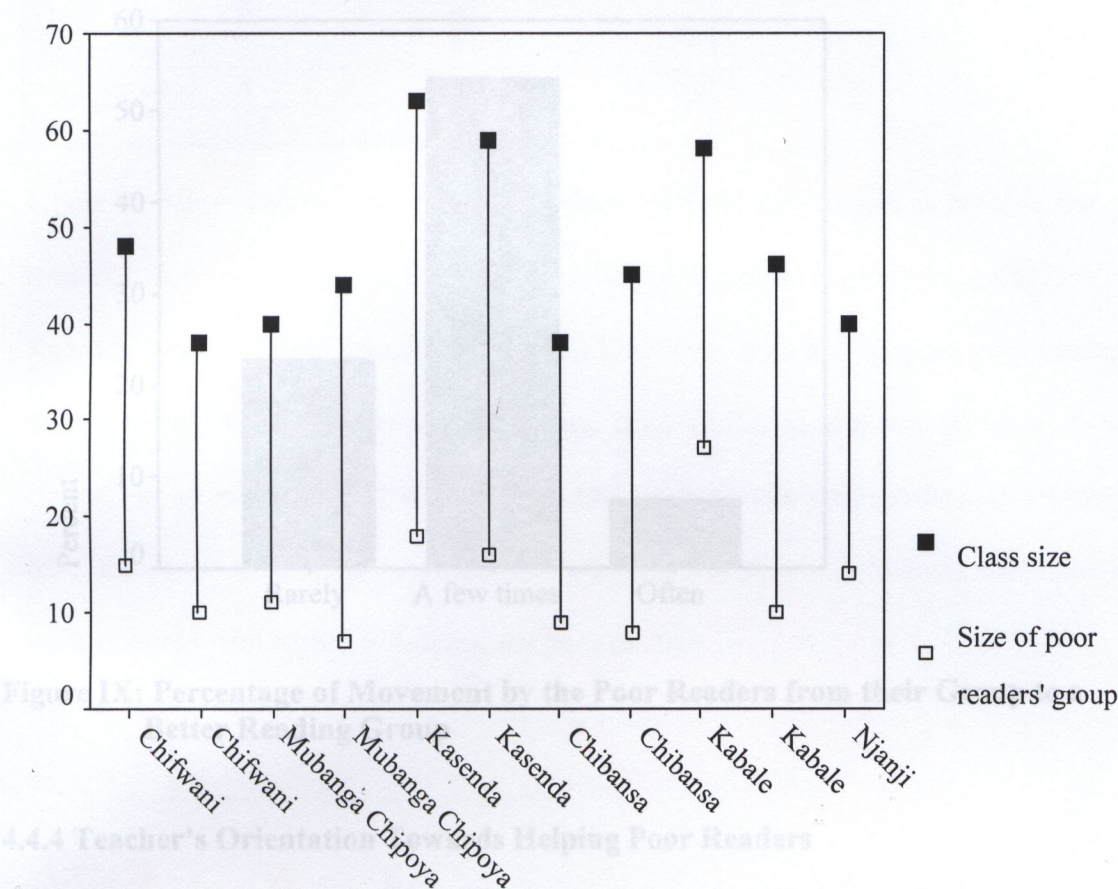


Figure VIII: Class Size and Size of the Poor Readers' Group in Class by Schools

4.4.3 Frequency of Movement of Pupils from a Poor to a Better Reading Group

Most of the teachers revealed that there was limited movement between the established reading groups in the classes. Figure IX below revealed that the majority of the teachers (53.8%) felt that there were only a few times when the pupils in the poor reading groups would move to a higher and better reading group. This is in comparison with 7.7% of the teachers who felt that there was often movement from the poor to the better reading groups. However, 23.1% of the teachers felt there was rare movement amongst the

groups. None of the teachers claimed to have very frequent movement in their classes, that is, from the poor to a better reading group.

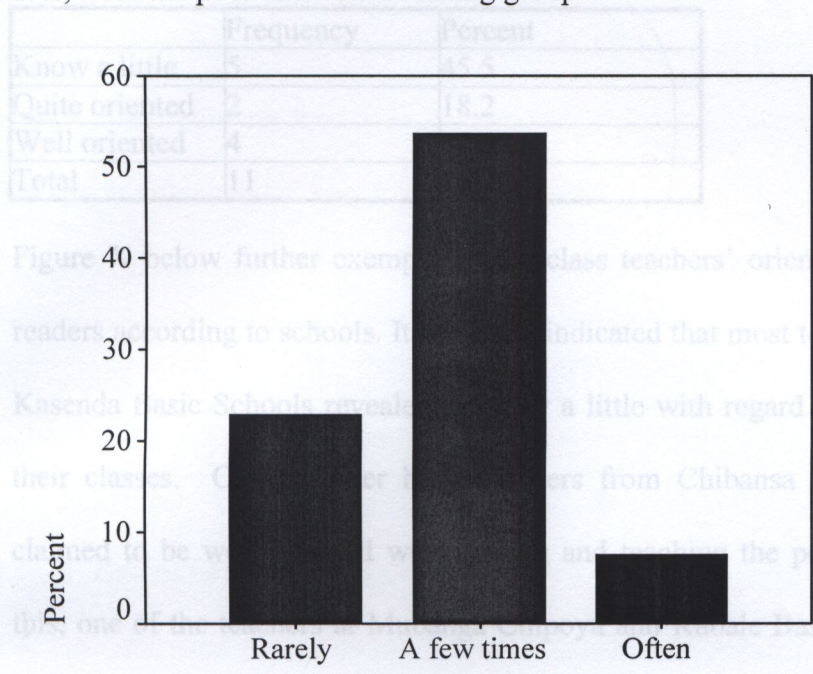


Figure IX: Percentage of Movement by the Poor Readers from their Group to a Better Reading Group

4.4.4 Teacher’s Orientation Towards Helping Poor Readers

When asked as to whether the teachers were oriented towards helping the poor readers in their classes, it was revealed that 45.5% claimed to know little with regard to helping the poor readers in their classes. There were 18.2% of the teachers who felt quite oriented while 36.4% teachers felt they were well oriented towards helping the poor readers. This is further illustrated in table 11 below.

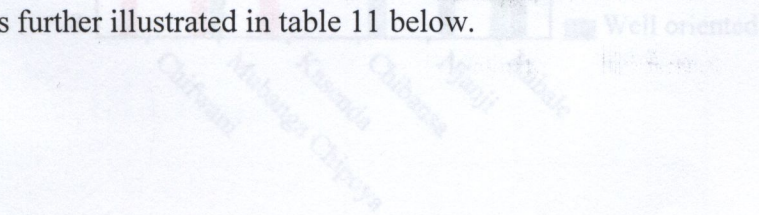


Figure X: Orientation of Teachers Towards Helping Poor Readers According to Schools

Table 11: Teachers’ Orientation to Helping Poor Readers

	Frequency	Percent
Know a little	5	45.5
Quite oriented	2	18.2
Well oriented	4	36.4
Total	11	100.0

Figure X below further exemplifies the class teachers’ orientation to helping the poor readers according to schools. It is clearly indicated that most teachers from Chifwani and Kasenda Basic Schools revealed to know a little with regard to helping poor readers in their classes. On the other hand teachers from Chibansa and Njanji Basic Schools claimed to be well oriented with helping and teaching the poor readers. In addition to this, one of the teachers at Mubanga Chipoya and Kabale Basic Schools said they were quite oriented with regard to helping the poor readers.

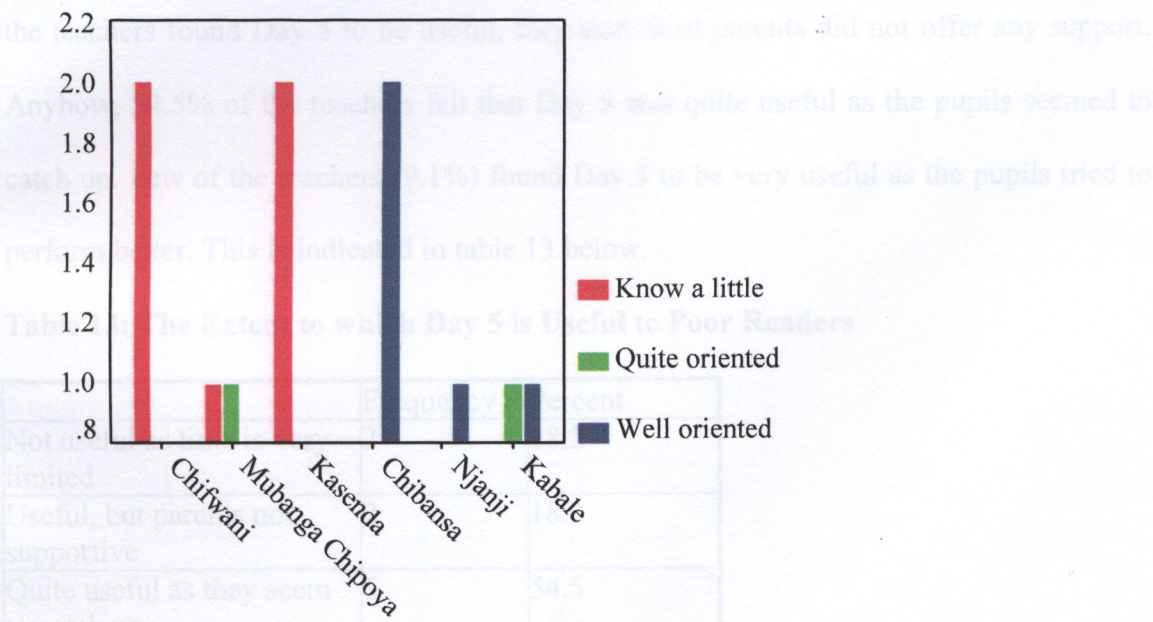


Figure X: Orientation of Teachers Towards Helping Poor Readers According to Schools

4.4.5 Teachers’ Views on the Importance of Day 5

When asked about the importance of Day 5 (earlier mentioned on page 19) to the poor readers, the majority of the class teachers (81.8%) further revealed that Day 5 was very helpful to the poor readers. This is indicated in Table 12 below. However 18.2% of the class teachers stated that Day 5 was not helpful.

Table 12: Importance of Day 5 in Helping the Poor Readers

	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	2	18.2
Helpful	9	81.8
Total	11	100.0

4.4.5.1 Extent of Day 5 Usefulness to Poor Readers

The teachers were further asked to state the extent to which Day 5 was useful to poor readers. The teachers who earlier stated that it was not helpful for the poor readers went on to say that Day 5 was not useful because the time was very limited. Though 18.2% of the teachers found Day 5 to be useful, they said most parents did not offer any support. Anyhow, 54.5% of the teachers felt that Day 5 was quite useful as the pupils seemed to catch up. Few of the teachers (9.1%) found Day 5 to be very useful as the pupils tried to perform better. This is indicated in table 13 below.

Table 13: The Extent to which Day 5 is Useful to Poor Readers

	Frequency	Percent
Not useful as time is very limited	2	18.2
Useful, but parents not supportive	2	18.2
Quite useful as they seem to catch up	6	54.5
Very useful, as they try to perform better	1	9.1
Total	11	100.0

4.4.6 Problems Encountered by Teachers When Teaching Poor Readers

The teachers stated that they experienced a number of problems when teaching the groups of poor readers in particular. The majority of the teachers, 36.4% according to Table 14 below, revealed that teaching the poor readers was very repetitive, tiresome and as a result boring. Late coming, lack of support from parents and the inability of the pupils to read were expressed as the main problems experienced by 27.3% of the teachers when teaching poor readers. The problem of late coming, as well as absenteeism and the inability of the pupils to read were problems cited by 18.2% of the teachers. Other teachers, 9.1%, complained that the poor readers required a lot of supervision when carrying out a task since they could not read. Another major problem encountered by 9.1% of class teachers when teaching poor readers was that they were very playful and never really paid attention during lessons.

Table 14: Problems Teachers Encountered when Teaching the Poor Readers

	Frequency	Percent
It's tiresome, repetitive hence boring	4	36.4
Can't read, late coming and absenteeism	2	18.2
Late coming, no support from parents & pupils can't read	3	27.3
Requires close supervision as they can't read	1	9.1
They are very playful & not attentive	1	9.1
Total	11	100.0



4.4.7 2 Availability of Reading Materials in the Classrooms

The teachers were also asked to comment on the availability of reading materials in their classrooms. It was revealed that 72.7% of the teachers had enough reading materials in their classes while 27.3% claimed to have a lot of reading materials. This is further demonstrated using Table 15 below.

Table 15: Availability of Reading Material in the Classrooms

	Frequency	Percent
Enough	8	72.7
A lot	3	27.3
Total	11	100.0

4.4.7.1 Utilisation of Reading Material by Poor Readers

The teachers went on to reveal that most of the poor readers, 72.7%, actually utilised the reading materials in their classes. Most of them were however quick to add that the poor readers basically used the books by participating in class tasks, though in most cases they merely browsed through the books (picture reading), or just followed along with what the others in the classroom were doing. However 27.3% of the teachers stated that the poor readers did not use the reading materials in their classes. This is indicated in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Whether the Poor Readers Utilise the Reading Material

	Frequency	Percent
No	3	27.3
Yes	8	72.7
Total	11	100.0

4.4.7.2 Frequency of Utilisation of Reading Material by Poor Readers

Figure XI below, illustrates how often the poor readers utilised the books in their classrooms. A few teachers, 9.1%, pointed out that the books were very rarely utilised. On the other hand, 27.3% of the teachers were of the view that the books were rarely utilised. Most of the teachers, 45.5%, pointed out that the books were used quite often whereas 18.2% of the teachers said that the books were often used.

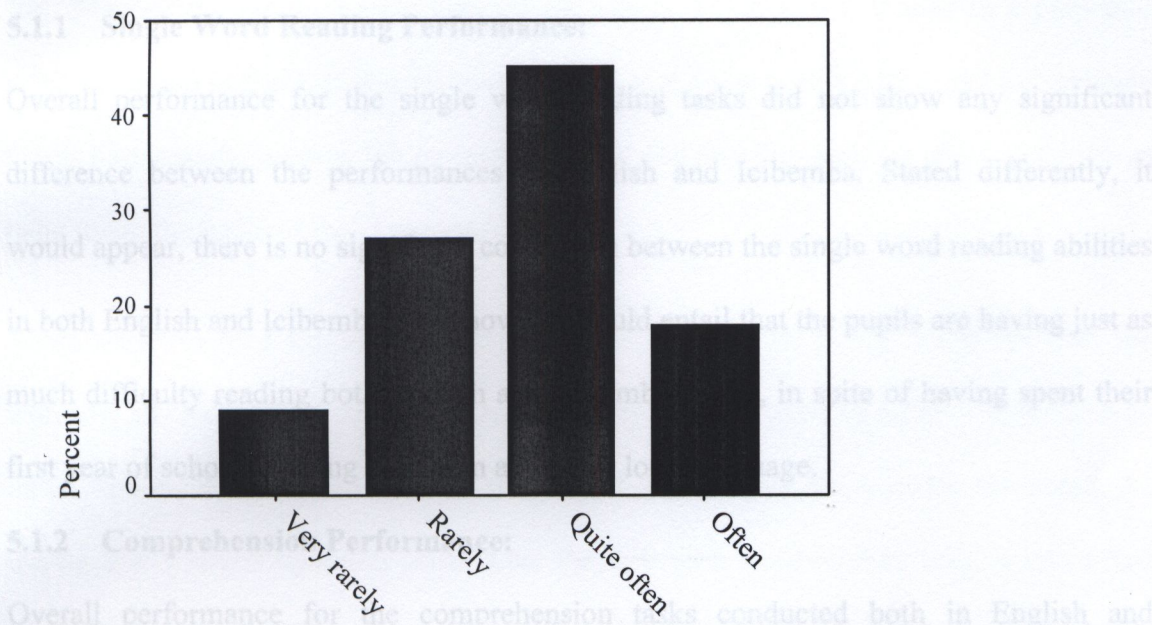


Figure XI: Percentage of Poor Readers Utilising the Reading Material in their Classes

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This chapter discusses the findings of this study in the sequence they have been presented in chapter four. First, the performance of the pupils on reading tasks and their reading habits has been presented.

5.1 Comparison of Overall Performance in English and Icibemba for the Single word Reading and Comprehension Tasks.

5.1.1 Single Word Reading Performance:

Overall performance for the single word reading tasks did not show any significant difference between the performances in English and Icibemba. Stated differently, it would appear, there is no significant connection between the single word reading abilities in both English and Icibemba. This however could entail that the pupils are having just as much difficulty reading both English and Icibemba words, in spite of having spent their first year of school learning to read in a familiar local language.

5.1.2 Comprehension Performance:

Overall performance for the comprehension tasks conducted both in English and Icibemba showed a significant better performance in the Icibemba comprehension task. This finding is in conformity with literature on the relevance of the NBTL in that when children learn in a familiar language they are able to identify with the activities in school quite easily (Higgins et al.2000).

5.2 Single Word Reading Performance in Detail

As has already been noted there was no significant difference in the performance in word reading tasks for English and Icibemba.

It was disheartening to note that most pupils could not read two letter or one-syllable words in Icibemba, a familiar language (see Appendix F page 96). This implies that the

pupils did not acquire blending skills of putting / *t* / and / *a* / together to make the word 'ta'. Most of the pupils merely guessed the letters or the vowel sounds in a particular word presented to them. It was however strange that a few pupils could read two syllable words like 'sopo'. Anyhow the researcher later noted that this was one of the sight words hang up on the walls of the classrooms.

When asked to read English words, a wide majority of the pupils could not read the words at all. As a result they just mentioned any English word or letter, which came to mind. The inability to read two and three letter words again showed that the pupils did not have any sound blending skills. Like the Icibemba word-reading task, it was noted that a few pupils could read one-syllable words like 'ten', 'boy' and 'tree'. These words were hang up on the walls of the classroom and so it is possible that the pupils simply memorised these words, as they did not show any skills of putting the sounds together.

Ideally, it was expected that the reading performance for words in Icibemba would be better than English seeing that the pupils had been in the NBTL class (where they were supposed to acquire the initial reading skills in Icibemba) for a whole year. This was bearing in mind the fact that at the time of research, the pupils had only learnt the English language for half a year.

5.3 Comprehension Performance in Detail

As has already been mentioned earlier, since the pupils could not read single words, there was no way they could have read a comprehension passage. This resulted in the researcher reading the passages and later asking the pupils to answer questions from the passage, orally.

Results from both the BASAT and passage reading comprehension revealed that the pupils were more comfortable with answering the comprehension questions in Ibibemba and performed better in this medium than they did in English. The nature of the answers given on the English comprehension tasks revealed that the pupils found English to be very alien. This was especially mostly evident on the passage reading task where most pupils would not say a word or rather not attempt to answer the questions and sometimes would repeat the question or even just mention any English word.

Though the performance on the English BASAT comprehension task indicated a much better performance than the English passage reading tasks, this does not imply that the pupils understood the English version of the BASAT, because they continued exhibiting signs of incompetence in the manner in which they answered the questions. Pupils were very hesitant to answer questions and when they did they were guessing. At times they stated that they preferred to answer the questions in Ibibemba. In cases where the pupils got the answers right, it was possible that they merely associated the answer with the picture illustration and so got the answer correct without really understanding the English text. For example, the illustration of a man sleeping (see Appendix 1, page 84) made

pupils only mention the word sleeping, though not in a clear manner as most of them would say ‘*seeping*’ or ‘*thleeping*.’

5.4.2 Vowel Sound Knowledge

5.4 Comparison of Awareness of the Alphabet Sounds and Letter Names

5.4.1 Letter-Name Knowledge Skills

Table 5 on page 41 shows the overall performance on letter-name knowledge. The result shows that a large majority of the pupils did not have adequate letter name knowledge skills. In this case, though the pupils had spent one and a half years in school, they could not identify most alphabet letter-names except for the first three or four letters, that is, *A*, *B*, *C* and *D*. Mostly the pupils would keep repeating the above letter names and at times would mention any letter name from memory, though not necessarily corresponding with the letter name in question. While some pupils demonstrated a heavy reliance on the alphabet song when identifying the letter-names, this strategy did not turn out to be very effective as most of the pupils did not really know the song and at times would associate two different letter-names (like *f-g*) to one letter only (such as *f*) when identifying the letter-names. Several studies such as those by Adams (1990) and Vellutino et al. (1996) argue that letter-name knowledge is the predictor of reading ability in longitudinal studies. In this case the children with poor letter-name skills are likely to experience reading problems throughout their school years if no intervention measures are put in place. Gelzheiser and Wood have also argued it in Wong (1998) that poor performance in letter-name knowledge tasks indicates that the children have not been raised in a print-rich environment. This conforms to the findings in this research, where the pupils did not attend pre-school and the only significant exposure they got to print material was when they started school in grade one. The other issue of concern is that these schools are in a

rural setting where it is rare to find homes with print-rich environments, as most parents are uneducated. (Wagner, 1987).

5.4.2 Vowel Sound Knowledge

As can be seen from Table 6 on page 43, the performance on this task was not any different from the picture observed in the letter-name knowledge task. A large number of the pupils did not seem to know the vowel sounds *a, e, i, o* and *u*, this is also reflected in Appendix A, page 94. Since vowel sounds are a component of letter sounds, they will be discussed further under the next caption.

5.4.3 Letter-Sound Knowledge

The frequency performance for the letter-sound knowledge task is presented in Table 7 on page 44. Here as can be seen from the results, the performance of the pupils is disheartening as a large number of the pupils were in the very poor category knowing only about four letter-sounds. Reference to Appendix B (page 94) further reveals that most of the pupils did not actually seem to have any concept of sounds at all, while Appendix E on page 95, also illustrates the extent of letter-sound awareness according to the schools. As has been stated earlier, a lot of studies have been done on letter-sounds/phonemes with researchers like Mann (1991) arguing that the beginning reader needs to appreciate the units that his or her writing system is representing as failure to do this results in difficulty to understand how written words relate to their spoken language counterparts.

The poor performance exhibited by the pupils on letter-sound awareness conforms to the widely held view by researchers that phoneme awareness is a problem for many young reading in spite of them being poor readers. However on reading enjoyment, matters of

children and for poor readers in particular (Wong, 1998; Mann, 1991; Torgesen, 2002 and Torgesen & Wagner, 1987).

Seeing that the performance of the pupils on phoneme or letter-sound awareness was extremely poor, they were likely to be facing a number of disadvantages in learning to read. Mattingly (1980) explains that individuals without phonological awareness skills do not view the alphabetic orthography as a sensible way of representing language, because the patterns of letter-sound correspondences appear strange and arbitrary. The other difficulty stems from the fact that learning to read new words involves segmenting the letter string into units that correspond to individual sounds (phonemes) and blending the individual sounds together to pronounce the word. Studies by Muller and Brady (2001) and Torgesen and Wagner (1987) further point out that an awareness of phonemes is a prerequisite of the ability to segment letter strings into phoneme-based units and to blend the resulting phonemes into words. It is true to state here that the clear lack of the needed prerequisites of reading (phoneme awareness) exhibited by the pupils in this study explains their inability to read even simple two or three letter words.

5.5 Comparing Reading Behaviour with Reading Achievement

In order to have a much more complete picture of the pupils' reading behaviours, several aspects of reading were looked at.

5.5.1 Reading Enjoyment

Table 8 on page 46, shows the assessment of the poor readers with regard to whether or not they enjoy reading. It is clearly indicated that the majority of the pupils actually enjoy reading in spite of them being poor readers. However on reading enjoyment, matters of

accuracy and honesty on the part of pupils could not really be guaranteed, and this will be illustrated further when looking at other aspects of reading behaviour.

Table 8 (on page 46) also shows a small minority of pupils who honestly stated that they did not really enjoy reading because they committed a lot of errors when reading.

5.5.2 Choice of Books Read

Since most pupils claimed to enjoy reading they were further asked to state the books they liked to read. Figure VII on page 46 illustrates that a large majority of the pupils like to read the Icibemba and English PRP story books, while a few pupils prefer to read only the Icibemba PRP books, with yet a smaller group of pupils stating they prefer to read only the English PRP books. It is cardinal to mention here that the PRP storybooks both in English and Icibemba are the main reading books found in all basic schools since the introduction of the PRP. In an attempt to provide a rich-reading environment as well as improve the literacy levels in the country, the basic schools have been stocked with a number of reading materials (Sampa, 2003). There are also reading books from the previous reading programme such as 'Jelita and Mulenga' which are still found in the classrooms and very few pupils said they like to read such books. This is probably because the vocabulary set that is currently being learnt is usually from the PRP books and the pupils find it easier to relate events in the stories to the vocabulary they learn. Though a few pupils said they enjoyed reading the Religious Education books they could not state what books in particular.

5.5.3 Reading Frequency of the Poor Readers

Although details of reading enjoyment above revealed that a majority of pupils enjoyed reading, an attempt to find how often the pupils read revealed the contradictory views. Table 9 on page 47 presents an idea of the reading frequency as it demonstrates that very few pupils read almost daily and a number of them only read occasionally. It is also indicated that the majority of pupils almost never read at all.

In spite of the information given by the pupils appearing contradictory, the findings on reading frequency, that the majority of pupils almost never read, can be supported by Catts (1995) who states that children identified as poor readers mostly tend to be less motivated to read and get less reading practice resulting in them falling farther and farther from their peers in reading and other academic achievement. Badian, et al., (1990) also indicate that when children "fail" in their first efforts learning to read they lose confidence in their ability as well as in reading activities. Rayner et al. (2001) also found that slow acquisition of reading ability hinders the development of the habit of reading, which could be one reason for most pupils reading very rarely. In any case, reading practice is important to both good and poor readers as Laberge and Samuels (1974) point out that the acquisition of reading skill is improved with constant practice. Another benefit of reading practice is that it supports comprehension ability, vocabulary growth and spelling skill (Rayner et al., 2001). This implies that in spite of all the odds that may surround the reading experience, the pupils still need to practice reading as often as possible.

5.5.4 Reading Preference

Table 10 on page 47 indicates that most of the pupils prefer to read in class than reading at home. Different pupils could have varying reasons for the stated preference. Anyhow it is more appropriate for them to prefer to read in class for the simple reason that most of the books they like to read are found at school (see Figure VII on page 46). In this case the pupils probably do not have any books to read when at home and most likely they do not get help from their families. The other small group who prefer to read from home could probably just be afraid of the repeated failure and humiliation they experience when reading in front of their peers and class teacher.

5.6 Information from the Class Teachers

The sex of the grade two teachers was predominantly female, that is, only one male out of eight teachers (see Appendix C page 94). This could probably be due to the widely held view among Zambians that females are supposed to look after children. Mandyata (2002) actually states that in the Zambian culture females are put at the center of child caring unlike in other cultures.

5.6.1 Class Size and the Size of the Group of Poor Readers

The different class sizes of the schools as well as the sizes of the poor readers in each class are presented in Figure VIII on page 49. Here as can be seen from the results, the class sizes are generally large, ranging from 38 to 63. The average class size is 47 with half of the sampled schools having less than 45 pupils in each class while the other half had over 45 pupils per class. With the implementation of the free education policy, the schools in the rural areas have experienced a rise in the class sizes. A study by

Makihonko & Chilufya (2000) also revealed that most Zambian classrooms are overcrowded with an overall pupil / teacher ratio of 54:1. However, one of the MoE's strategic plans is to ensure that by the year 2007 the pupil to teacher ratio will be 45:1 (MoE, 2003). Figure VIII on page 49 also shows the size of the group of poor readers according to schools. This varied greatly, ranging from 7 to 27 and also shows that the schools with huge class sizes also had the big group sizes of the poor readers for example one of the classes at Kabale Basic School with 58 pupils had 27 pupils in the group for poor readers. In addition to this, the classes at Kasenda Basic School in Kasama both had very large class sizes of 59 and 63 with corresponding big sizes of the poor readers groups, that is, 16 and 18 respectively. Similarly, schools with relatively small class sizes like Mubanga Chipoya and Chibansa Basic Schools had smaller numbers of pupils in the poor readers' group, that is, 7 and 11, as well as 8 and 9 respectively. Though the sizes of the poor readers' groups are generally big, Kelly (2000) states that PRP's target was that by the year 2005, 4/5 pupils would achieve nationally agreed reading standards in grades 1, 4 and 7. In this case, findings in this study have not affirmed the PRP's target for the year 2005 considering most of the classes had more than 11 pupils in the poor reading groups. However, schools like Mubanga Chipoya and Chibansa Basic with small sizes of poor readers' groups could tally with PRP's target considering that only 1 out of every 5 pupils would fail to reach nationally agreed reading standards. On the other hand stating with utmost certainty that 4 out of 5 pupils actually reached acceptable reading standards would be another issue altogether. This is because in most of the schools the teachers revealed that only a small number of pupils actually broke through to literacy, an issue that raises a lot of questions and would require further research.

5.6.2 Frequency of Movement of Pupils to a Better Reading Group

Seeing that the PRP organises the class in four different ability groups (MoE, 2002), it was interesting to note how often pupils in the poor reading groups were moved to better reading groups. Figure IX on page 50 shows the actual rate of movement of pupils from the poor readers' group to a better reading group. The majority of teachers revealed that there were only a few times when the members of the poor reading groups would move to a better reading group. Otherwise it was a rare situation implying that in most cases the poor readers were stuck to their group, probably because there was no improvement in their reading skills. This finding tallies with the view held by some researchers that for many children, especially the poor readers, reading is an extra ordinary effortful task, which may be a long and complicated process lasting several years (Logan, 1997). This view could explain why the pupils in the poor reading groups seem to be constantly in the same low achieving group. If acquiring reading skills may last several years, it may be even longer for these pupils seeing that at the end of every school year they have to move to a higher grade because of the accelerated learning system in place and therefore have to tackle tasks which are much more complicated for them.

5.6.3 The Orientation of Teachers with regard to Helping the Poor Readers

Seeing the extremely low levels of reading displayed by the poor readers, it was good to note whether their teachers were actually oriented towards helping them. Table 11 on page 51 reveals that most of the teachers claimed to know only a little on how to help poor readers in their classes. On the other hand, a number of the teachers said they were well oriented on how to help poor readers in their classes. These were mostly from Chibansa, Kabale and Njanji Basic Schools as is indicated in Figure X on page 51. A few

teachers said they were quite oriented implying they had an idea of how to help poor readers in their classes. Though some teachers claimed to be well oriented with regard to helping the poor readers, for example the teachers from Njanji and Kabale Basic Schools, their classes had large sizes of poor reading groups. For a class with 40 pupils for instance, Njanji Basic School had a relatively big number of pupils in the poor reading group, that is 14 (see Figure VIII, page 49). If indeed the teacher from Kabale Basic School was also well oriented in helping poor readers, it is equally strange to note how that class in particular had the largest number of poor readers, that is, 27 out of 58 pupils. In addition to this, a look at the phoneme awareness skills (see Figure VI, page 45) of the pupils from Njanji and Kabale where the teachers claimed to be well oriented in helping poor readers does not tally with the teachers' views. As can be seen from Figure VI (page 45), the majority of pupils were only sure of less than 5 letter-sounds, which are a major prerequisite for acquiring reading skills. So the teachers' claims cannot really be verified with performance displayed by pupils in reading tasks. As Cooter (2003) puts it, the true benchmark for expertise in teaching is enabling children to continue to become more literate than ever before.

Teachers from Chifwani and Kasenda Basic Schools in Kasama (where PRP was first clearly piloted), all claimed to know only a little about helping poor readers in their classes while some teachers from Mubanga Chipoya and Kalabe Basic Schools said they were quite oriented. It is interesting to note that although the teachers from Chifwani and Kasenda Basic Schools knew only a little about helping poor readers a few of their pupils were competent with up to 9 letter-sounds. It is also good to note that in as much as the teachers at Chibansa Basic School said they were well oriented with helping the poor

readers, their classes also had small numbers of pupils in the group of poor readers, that is, 8 and 9 (see Figure VIII, page 49) although the performance of the pupils on letter-sounds was not that good. As can be noticed it was not easy to relate the teachers' orientation with helping poor readers to the pupils' reading acquisition skills.

The aspect of the teachers' orientation to helping poor readers is in every sense linked to teacher training. To ascertain teacher training under the PRP, Tambulukani (2001) points out that it is agreed policy that no teacher should teach PRP courses without under-going the appropriate training in the use of those courses. In view of helping poor readers however, the professional development of teachers can be said to be limited where it begins and ends with awareness level or first exposure training. Cooter (2003) points out that the short workshops for teachers where myriad aspects of reading are introduced create little more than simple consciousness of a pedagogical construct. To produce positive changes in reading classrooms, it is important to go deeper in capacity building efforts.

5.6.4 Teachers' Views on the Importance of Day 5

Most of the teachers found Day 5 to be very important. Table 12 on page 52 shows clearly that most teachers found Day 5 very useful while a few teachers said it was not really useful. Though most teachers said Day 5 was helpful to the poor readers, this is not really reflected in real terms in that these pupils continued being in the same ability groups as has already been pointed out. Anyhow, this could boil down to the teachers' limited training.

5.6.4.1 Extent to which Day 5 is Useful to Poor Readers

Table 13 on page 52 shows the extent to which Day 5 is useful to the poor readers. A few teachers said Day 5 was not very useful seeing that the time allocated for it was very limited.

The aspect of time is a very important feature in helping poor readers because as has been alluded to earlier, they do not seem to acquire reading skills as easily as the good readers.

Smith (1990) argues that stretching the learning time of some pupils based on the premise that all individuals are capable of learning to read is cardinal. In this sense, in as much as Day 5 is meant to enhance the learning process of the poor readers, its limited time does not offer adequate stretching of the learning time, which is essential to poor readers.

Although a few teachers found Day 5 useful they complained of parents not offering support to their children. In line with this, several studies such as those by Evans (2000) and Farah (2000) have emphasised the importance of parental and community support stating that so much of a child's education and socialisation depend on parents and other adults and children who form part of a community.

A good number of teachers found Day 5 to be quite useful saying the pupils tend to catch up and perform better. However, as has been stated earlier, the teachers' views that pupils seem to catch up and perform better can not really be substantiated in real terms seeing the poor readers can hardly move to a better reading group.

5.6.5 The Problems Teachers Encounter when Teaching Poor Readers

The different problems experienced by teachers when teaching the poor readers are indicated in Table 14 (page 53). Most of the teachers find teaching the poor readers a repetitive process that is boring and tiresome. This view tallies with Hanco (1995)'s finding where teachers in ordinary classrooms did not enjoy teaching children with repeated failures experienced by pupils in learning to read. As a result they did not want to pay attention and tended to avoid reading tasks. In most cases the children tended to

A number of teachers complained of lack of support from parents, late coming and the fact that the pupils cannot read. The issue of punctuality is consistent with the finding by Higgins et.al (2000) who points out that late coming and absenteeism is quite rampant among rural children because of the long distances pupils have to cover. The teachers' view that these children cannot read implies that the teachers have low expectation of the poor readers. Several studies have also pointed out that it is such teachers' attitudes and beliefs that eventually affect the learners' expectation (Muthukrishna, 2000). In a related study, Higgins et al. (2000) observed that under the NBTTL the slow group frequently became a 'no-go' area with teachers accepting that such pupils were incapable of making worthwhile headway.

Table 14 on page 53, indicates that a few other teachers also echoed issues of late coming, the pupils' inability to read and absenteeism.

Another group of teachers also complained that poor readers required close supervision because they could not read and usually they tended to be very playful and not attentive. In line with this, Gearheart (1986) states that lack of motivation by pupils is among the difficult problems experienced by teachers when teaching students with learning

disabilities. It is a recognised fact that some of the poor readers could have learning disabilities or other special educational needs as the cause of their reading failure (Higgins et al. 2000).

Gearheart (1986) further points out that the lack of motivation stemmed from the repeated failures experienced by pupils in learning to read. As a result they did not want to pay attention and tended to avoid reading tasks. In most cases the children tended to find their self-esteem in extra curricular activities, thereby becoming very playful.

5.6.6 Availability of Reading Material in the Classrooms

Table 15 on page 54 shows the response of teachers on the availability of reading material in their classrooms. The majority of teachers revealed that they had just enough reading materials in their classes, while a few of them said they had a lot of reading material. Generally, this shows that the situation in the classes is getting in line with Ministry of Education's strategic plan of having a pupil: text book ratio of 2: 1 by 2007 (Sampa, 2003).

When the teachers were further asked as to whether the pupils actually used the reading materials, the majority said they did by way of picture reading and following along with what the others were doing while a few of the teachers stated that the pupils did not use the books. In this case the poor readers are at a stage some researchers refer to as 'prereading' stage. According to Clark & Uhry (1995), this stage lasts from birth to age six. It goes from the very beginning of an individual's language awareness to the ability to recognise and name letters of the alphabet and even read some popular names on signs and packages or some words in familiar books. It can therefore be said that the poor

readers were in the prereading stage seeing that they could read some popular words hung against the walls of their classroom though they could not read two letter words.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

The main objective of this study was to find out the poor readers were benefiting from the 'new' child centered approach of learning to read under the Primary Reading Programme. The specific objectives were to find out if (1) the poor readers had acquired the initial literacy skills, (2) were they were developing literacy skills in English, (3) teachers were interested towards helping poor readers acquire literacy skills, (3) classrooms had adequate reading material to support reading development and (4) whether the poor readers utilized the reading material. The following is a summary of the significant findings from this study.

In spite of the introduction of a child centered approach of learning to read (PRP), which takes into account the different needs of the learners, pupils with poor reading problems were not benefiting from this strategy. Also, in regard to acquiring reading skills. The large class sizes did not allow for the 'child centered' approach to be a reality. The study further showed that the poor readers had not acquired adequate initial literacy skills to enable them read words. The poor readers exhibited very poor knowledge of the alphabet letters and their sounds and they could not put sounds together.

Even though the pupils could not read and write, they were more comfortable learning in Icibemba than they were in English. Seeing they lacked adequate initial literacy skills in Icibemba probably due to ineffective teaching and learning styles they did not have a

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

The main objective of this study was to find out whether the poor readers were benefiting from the 'new' child centred approach to learning to read under the Primary Reading Programme. The specific objectives were to find out if (1) the poor readers had acquired the initial literacy skills and how well they were developing literacy skills in English, (2) teachers were oriented towards helping poor readers acquire literacy skills, (3) classrooms had adequate reading material to support reading development and (4) whether the poor readers utilised the reading material. The following is a summary of the significant findings from this study.

In spite of the introduction of a child centred approach to learning to read (PRP), which takes into account the different needs of the learners, pupils with poor reading problems were not benefiting from this arrangement, that is, with regard to acquiring reading skills. The large class sizes did not allow for the 'child centred' approach to be a reality. The study further showed that the poor readers had not acquired adequate initial literacy skills to enable them read words. The poor readers exhibited very poor knowledge of the alphabet letters and their sounds and they could not put sounds together.

Even though the pupils could not read and write, they were more comfortable learning in Icibemba than they were in English. Seeing they lacked adequate initial literacy skills in Icibemba probably due to ineffective teaching and learning styles they did not have a

basis of what to translate in developing English literacy skills. Therefore learning to read in English was a much more complicated task because the pupils found this language 'strange'.

Most teachers were not oriented towards helping poor readers in their classes. In this case their training did not prepare them to teach all pupils adequately according to the pupils' needs. This made the idea of 'child centredness' difficult from the teacher's perspective because in as much as the teacher could be aware of the aspect of poor reading, he or she was not competent to help children with such problems.

On a positive note the study revealed that the classrooms had enough reading materials to support reading development. However, the adequate reading materials did not help to develop the reading skills of the poor readers because the important person, the teacher did not know how to help the poor readers in this regard. That was why the poor readers tended to picture read because they were still at the prereading stage despite being in grade two.

6.2 Conclusion

In view of the findings and discussion of this study outlined above it can therefore be concluded that the current educational literacy programme in Zambia is not comprehensive of all the sectors of pupil populace as it does not fully meet the needs of the majority of the pupils such as the slow and poor readers. The appalling standards of reading for both local Zambian Language and English in the lower and middle basic grades is bound to continue worrying authorities in the Zambian Ministry of Education

(MoE), parents and the general Zambian public for some time if the loopholes in the educational system are not attended to urgently. Furthermore, the majority of the children are not likely to cope with educational demands of the system and this may increase the drop-out rate in schools as well as place a demand on the system to revert to the idea of 'repeating' grades as opposed to the current principle of 'acceleration'.

The mere fact that the teachers who are the most critical elements in the educational system are facing a lot of challenges to attain 'breakthrough' to literacy in both English and the local Zambian language shows that there are a lot of other factors that are not adequately in place yet. The teachers are subjected to teaching large classes especially in rural schools and this situation does not allow for a child-centered approach when teaching literacy skills. In addition to this, the teachers are not fully trained to teach literacy to poor readers such that in as much as the schools may be flooded with a substantial number of English and Zambian language 'readers' to improve reading progress, the effect will not materialize easily because of the inadequate literacy teaching methods the pupils are exposed to.

6.3 Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the following are some recommendations to the Ministry of Education to help realise the goal that every pupil succeeds in learning to read and write clearly, correctly and confidently, in a Zambian language and in English.

1. The need for the adequate training of teachers: Since the MoE has pledged highest priority for the attainment of the literacy goal, there was need to improve the nature of teacher capacity-building.
Currently, the common form of training for the PRP teachers is through short seminars and workshops which do not provide sufficient information on teaching reading to the slow learners, apart from raising awareness on issues such as poor reading. Therefore the Ministry of Education should ensure that the teachers teaching initial literacy skills are well trained up to university level. This will help teachers acquire diagnostic skills necessary in assessment as well as useful guidelines on the prevention and correction of the difficulties they experience when teaching slow learners.
2. Early childhood education should be introduced as soon as possible in all the government schools countrywide. This will help stop having pupils in grade two at prereading stages. Laying a good foundation may provide a good basis for acquiring reading skills in grade one for all children and may also allow for accelerated learning thereafter.
3. The MoE should reduce the class-sizes by building more classrooms. All along the practice has been to split the big class to two, but then this practice reduces the learning day to about two hours. Building more classes will make the learning day long enough to give sufficient time of adequate incorporation of the requisite reading skills.

4. Besides building more classrooms, the Ministry of Education should train and employ teacher aides to help class teachers in grades one up to three where reading skills needed to be solidified. This may enable the teacher to manage the class properly by freeing him/her of some responsibilities thereby giving the teacher ample time to attend to the different needs of the pupils.
5. The MoE should provide adequate teaching materials to class teachers, which can allow the teachers to cater for the poor readers in the classroom.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

- For further research in this area, it would be useful to find out the prevalence of reading difficulties in the early grades, that is, one and two. Such a study would give an idea of the percentage of pupils not adequately catered for under the Primary Reading Programme and are at risk of dropping out of school thereby highlight the need for adequate teacher training and adjustment of the Primary Reading Programme where appropriate to accommodate the poor readers.
- Once early childhood education is implemented it would be cardinal to assess whether adequate screening and assessment procedures would be in place. This is important, as it would enhance early intervention to poor readers before formal instruction in reading.
- It would also be important to carry out longitudinal studies once the adjustments are made to the teacher training and Primary Reading Programme. Such studies would enhance continuous feedback to the programme administrators and enable them to make necessary adjustments with the sole purpose of helping the poor readers.

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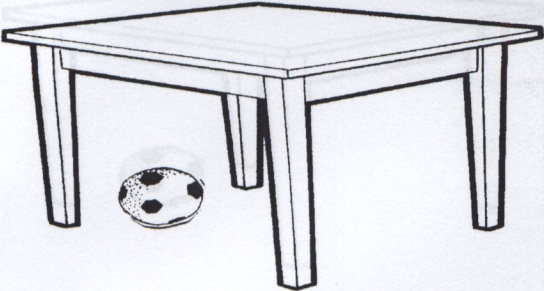
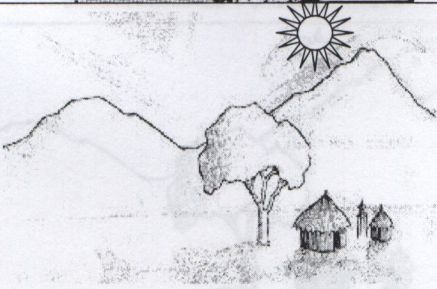
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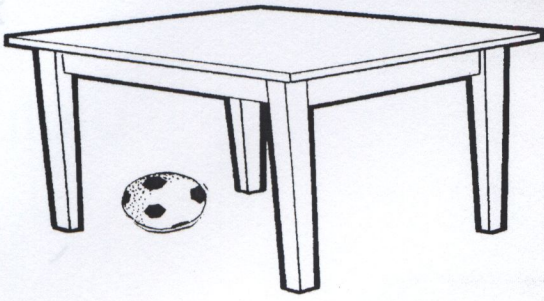
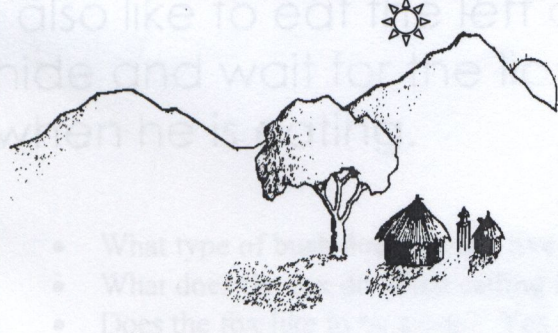
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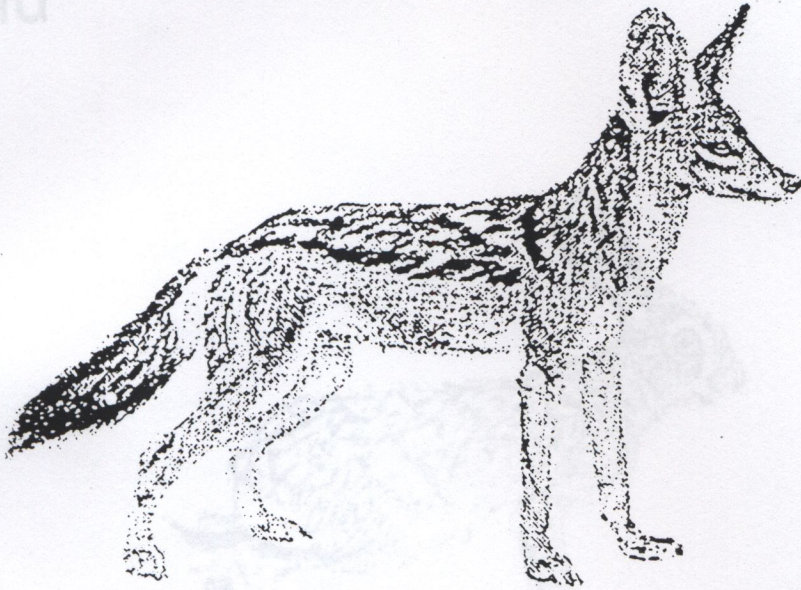
Appendix 1: BASAT English

G. Reading Comprehension (Tick the child's response)	
	<p>a. The ball is on the table.</p> <p>b. The ball is under the table.</p> <p>c. The ball is under the car.</p>
	<p>a. He is standing.</p> <p>b. He is walking.</p> <p>c. He is sleeping.</p>
	<p>a. She is drawing a chair.</p> <p>b. She is drawing a bed.</p> <p>c. She is making a drum.</p>
	<p>a. The sun is not shining.</p> <p>b. The sun is shining.</p> <p>c. The moon is shining.</p>

Appendix 2: BASAT Icibemba

<p>G. Ukubelenga Nookumfwa (congeni ubwasuko bwamwana)</p> 	<p>a. Umupila uli pa itebulo</p> <p>b. Umupila uli mwisamba lya itebulo.</p> <p>c. Umupila uli mwisamba lya motoka</p>
	<p>a. Umulumendo naiminina.</p> <p>b. Umulumendo aleenda.</p> <p>c. Umulumendo nalaala.</p>
	<p>a. Umukashana aleelenga icipuna</p> <p>b. Umukashana aleelenga beti</p> <p>c. Umukashana aleepanga ing'oma.</p>
	<p>a. Akasuba takabalike</p> <p>b. Akasuba nakabalika.</p> <p>c. Umweshi naubalika</p>

Fox



I am a fox. I live in the bush where there are few trees. I am very clever. I make noise and cry a lot when I am calling my friends.

Sometimes, I live with a lot of friends in a group, but I also like living alone.

I eat small and big animals like impalas, birds like chickens and snakes.

I also like to eat the left over food from a lion. So I hide and wait for the lion to leave some food when he is eating.

- What type of bush does the fox live in?
- What does the fox do when calling friends?
- Does the fox like to be alone? Yes or No
- What does the fox like eating?

Appendix 4:

Icibemba Passage Reading (Kalulu)

Kalulu

1. is

2. no

3. boy

4. ten

5. tree

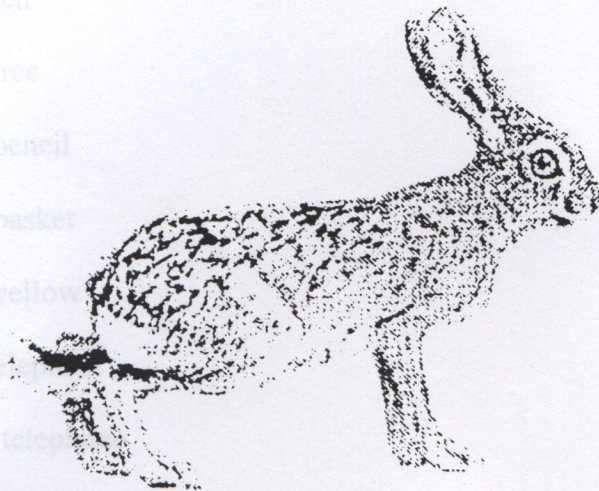
6. pencil

7. basket

8. yellow

9. e

10. tele



Nine Kalulu. Njikala mu fyani umwaba ifimpusa.
Ndya fye ifyani.

Amolu ya kunuma yalangafwa ukubutukisha ku
filwani ififwaya ukunjipaya. Ulubwabwa no tunama
tumo tumo ukubikapo fye na bantu bene
balancusha.

- Bushe Kalulu ekala mufyani umwaba finshi?
- Pambali ya fyani, nifinshi fimbi Kalulu atemwa ukulya?
- Cinshi cafwilisha Kalulu ukubutukisha?
- Nibanani abatemwa ukwipaya Kalulu?

Appendix 5:

English Words

- 1. is
- 2. no
- 3. boy
- 4. ten
- 5. tree
- 6. pencil
- 7. basket
- 8. yellow
- 9. elephant
- 10. telephone

Appendix 6:

Vowel Template

Icibemba Words

1. wa
2. ce
3. kwi
4. lya
5. sopo
6. mona
7. kwata
8. inkoko
9. umuntu
10. impanga

Appendix 7:

Vowel Template



Appendix 8:

Letter Name / Letter Sound Template

a b c d e f

g h i j k l

m n o p q r

s t u v w x

y z

Appendix 9:

The Reading Behaviour of Pupils

Interview Schedule for Pupils

Please answer the following questions.

1. Do you enjoy reading?
 - (1) no
 - (2) yes
2. If not, why?
 - (1) do not read as fast as my peers
 - (2) commit a lot of errors when reading
 - (3) do not understand what I read
3. If yes, what type of books do you like to read?
4. How often do you read?
 - (1) Close to never
 - (2) Occasionally
 - (3) Almost daily
5. Where do you like reading?
 - (1) At home
 - (2) In class

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 10: Frequency of performance for the Vowel Sound Knowledge task

Class Teachers' Views with Regard to the Performance of Poor Readers

Interview Schedule for Teachers

Please answer the following questions.

- (1) What is the number of pupils in your class?
- (2) How many pupils are in the low performing group?
- (3) How often do the poor readers move from their pace group onto a higher performing group?
Very rarely, rarely, few times, quite often, often.
- (4) How oriented are you towards helping the poor readers?
Know nothing, a little, quite oriented, well oriented.
- (5) Do you think Day 5 is of help to the poor reader?
Yes, no.
 - (i) If yes, why?
 - (ii) If no, why?
- (6) What is the main problem you encounter when teaching the group of poor readers?
- (7) What more do you think the government should do to help poor readers in schools?
- (8) How much reading material do you have in your class?
Very little, little, enough, quite a lot, a lot.
- (9) Do the poor readers utilise these books?
Yes, No.
- (10) How often?
Very rare, rarely, a few times, quite often.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix A: Frequency of performance for the Vowel Sound Knowledge task

	Frequency	Percent
Random guess of vowels	26	43.3
Very poor, 1 vowel	9	15.0
Poor, 2 vowels	7	11.7
Average, 3 vowels	4	6.7
Good, 4 vowels	7	11.7
Very good, all vowels	7	11.7
Total	60	100.0

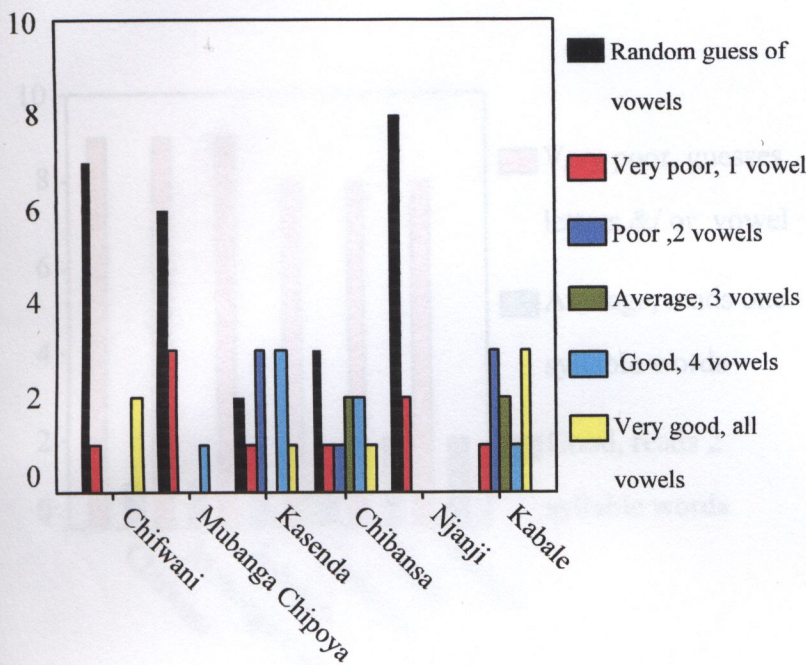
Appendix B: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Letter Sound Knowledge Task

	Frequency	Percent
No concept of sounds	35	58.3
Very poor, 1-4 sounds	19	31.7
Poor, 5-9 sounds	6	10.0
Total	60	100.0

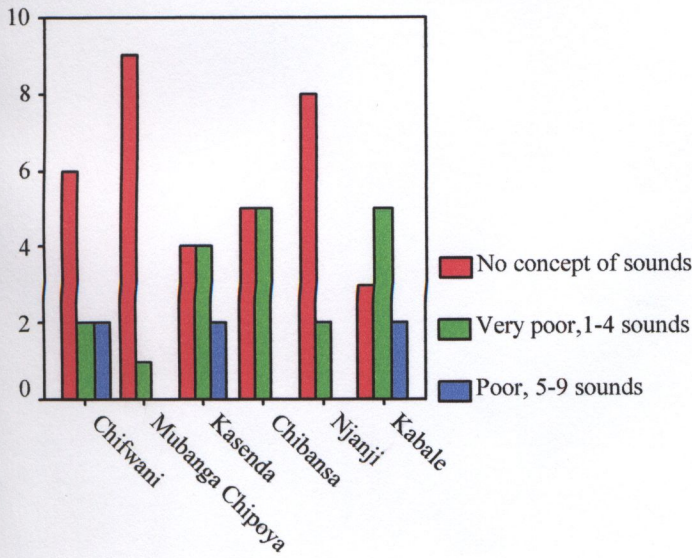
Appendix C: Sex of Teachers by Schools

Sex/ School	Female	Male	Total
Chifwani	1		1
Mubanga Chipoya	2		2
Kasenda	1		1
Chibansa	1		1
Njanji		1	1
Kabale	2		2
Total	7	1	8

Appendix D: Frequency of Performance levels for the Knowledge of Vowels Task by Schools



Appendix E: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Letter Sound Knowledge Task according to Schools



Appendix F: Frequency of Performance Levels for the Icibemba Word Reading Task

